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DR.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

AND

HIS WORKS:

BEING

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICAL REVIEW.

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BY

JAMES BALL,

AUTHOR OF "THE POPULAR CONVEYANCER."

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.

My aim has been to furnish an intelligible sketch of the personal character and writings of Dr. Holmes, with the view of popularizing, if possible, him and his works among English readers. Those works are already widely known and appreciated in this country; but there is room for an extended knowledge of them; for they contain much to instruct and elevate the mind, as well as please its lighter fancy. I have ventured in some few instances to turn from the immediate purpose of the work, and introduce some reflections of my own. Should these prove dull, I may hope to be forgiven, as they will at least serve as foils to the beauties I have culled from the writings under criticism.

Throughout my work I have often referred to "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table," "The Professor at the Breakfast-Table," and "The Poet at the Breakfast-Table," respectively, by the abbreviated terms of "The Autocrat," "The Professor," and "The Poet."

J. B.

January, 1878.

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CHAPTER I.

PREFATORY.

THE lives of great men are so often marred by wretchedness of outward circumstances, or by their own perversities of living, that it is a rare pleasure when one is able to contemplate the life of a great man, who is also a successful, good, and happy man. Such is the pleasure which we may experience in the following out of the purpose of these pages.

Our purpose is to place before our readers a sketch of the personal circumstances and character of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes—a brief biography—and to discuss critically his works: illustrating both biography and criticism with examples from his writings. In the working out of this purpose, we shall therefore—if we are successful—look at "the outer wrapping" of the man, that which belongs to him as an individual: and then discover his "spirit," that which belongs not only to himself, but to all men of all times who are willing to study him and accept

him as one of their teachers. And in inviting the reader to give us attention whilst we do this, we think we need not apologise; for it is ever a pleasurable, and as well profitable, occupation for both reader and writer, to contemplate the life and works of a great and good man: inasmuch as from a living and notable example of good we can gather inspiration and resolution such as mere precept does not afford.

With so much of introduction, let us proceed to the execution of our purpose.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRIEF BIOGRAPHY.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES—now endeared to so many readers in both the old and new world, as the "Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table," and the Professor, who (besides presiding, or leading the conversation at the breakfast table) has told us the charming stories entitled "Elsie Venner" and "The Guardian Angel" —was born at Cambridge, near Boston, in the new world, on the 29th day of August, 1809. He says:—

> "Know old Cambridge! Hope you do—
> Born there! Don't say so! I was, too.
> (Born in a house with a gambrel-roof,—
> Standing still, if you must have proof.—
> 'Gambrel!—Gambrel!'—Let me beg
> You'll look at a horse's hinder leg,—
> First great angle above the hoof,—
> That's the gambrel; hence gambrel-roof.)"

In his writings are many references to his childhood and his childish experiences. Thus in the "Autocrat"

he makes what he calls "a few intimate revelations relating especially to his early life." He states :—

"I was born and bred among books and those who knew what was in books. I was carefully instructed in things temporal and spiritual. But up to a considerable maturity of childhood I believed Raphael and Michael Angelo to have been superhuman beings. The central doctrine of the prevalent religious faith of Christendom was utterly confused and neutralised in my mind for years by one of those too common stories of actual life, which I overheard repeated in a whisper. Why did I not ask? you will say. You don't remember the rosy pudency of sensitive children. The first instinctive movement of the little creatures is to make a *cache*,* and bury in it beliefs, doubts, dreams, hopes, and terrors. I am uncovering one of these *caches*. Do you think I was necessarily a greater fool and coward than another?

"I was afraid of ships. Why, I could never tell. One other source of alarm had a still more fearful significance. There was a great wooden HAND—a glovemaker's sign, which used to swing and creak in the blast. Oh, the dreadful hand! always hanging there ready to catch up a little boy, who would come home to supper no more, nor yet to bed—whose porringer would be laid away empty thenceforth, and

* A hiding-place.

his half-worn shoes wait until his smaller brother grew to fit them.

"No Roman soothsayer ever had such a catalogue of *omens* as I found in the Sibylline leaves of my childhood. That trick of throwing a stone at a tree and attaching some mighty issue to hitting or missing, which you will find mentioned in one or more biographies, I well remember. Stepping on or over certain particular things—Dr. Johnson's especial weakness—I got the habit of at a very early age.

"With these follies mingled sweet delusions, which I loved so well I would not outgrow them, even when it required a voluntary effort to put a momentary trust in them. Here is one which I cannot help telling you.

"The firing of the great guns at the Navy-yard is easily heard at the place where I was born and lived. 'There is a ship of war come in,' they used to say, when they heard them. Of course I supposed that such vessels came in unexpectedly, after indefinite years of absence—suddenly as fallen stones—and that the great guns roared in their astonishment and delight at the sight of the old war ship splitting the bay with her cutwater. Now the sloop-of-war the Wasp, Captain Blakely, after gloriously capturing the Reindeer and the Avon, had disappeared from the face of the ocean, and was supposed to be lost. But there was no proof of it, and, of course, for a time hopes

were entertained that she might be heard from. Long after the last real chance had utterly vanished, I pleased myself with the fond illusion that somewhere on the waste of waters she was still floating, and there were *years* during which I never heard the sound of the great guns booming inland from the Navy-yard without saying to myself, 'The Wasp has come!' and almost thinking I could see her, as she rolled in, crumpling the water before her, weather-beaten, barnacled, with shattered spars and thread-bare canvas, welcomed by the shouts and tears of thousands. This was one of the dreams that I nursed and never told. Let me make a clean breast of it now, and say, that so late as to have outgrown childhood, perhaps to have got far on to manhood, when the roar of the cannon has struck suddenly on my ear, I have started with a thrill of vague expectation and tremulous delight, and the long unspoken words have articulated themselves in the mind's dumb whisper, *The Wasp has come!*"

Here we see the imaginative young American—though only so by birth, being cosmopolitan in his sympathies, and most essentially *British* in his idiocrasy—here we see the imaginative young Oliver Wendell Holmes, at an early age observant and *fancy-full:* at that time doubtless gathering up ideas for future use, and planting the seeds of thought which have since produced so glorious a fruitage.

But listen to the recital of some other childish experiences, which have their import as indicating the mental and moral growth of our author. He proceeds thus :—

" I made three acquaintances at a very early period of life, my introduction to whom was never forgotten. The first unequivocal act of wrong that has left its trace in my memory was this : refusing a small favor asked of me—nothing more than telling what had happened at school one morning. No matter who asked it ; but there were circumstances which saddened and awed me. I had no heart to speak ; I faltered some miserable, perhaps petulant, excuse, stole away, and the first battle of life was lost. What remorse followed I need not tell. Then and there, to the best of my knowledge, I first consciously took Sin by the hand and turned my back on Duty. Time has led me to look upon my offence more leniently ; I do not believe it, or any other childish wrong is infinite, as some have pretended ; but infinitely finite. Yet, oh, if I had but won that battle ? "

One sees here the sterling worth of our author's character ;—a feeling which can scarce be put into words—a feeling, though, of intense sympathy—arises in one's heart at this expression of his yearning towards the higher, which marks the regret felt by him for his lost moral battle. We all agree with his estimate of the finite nature of his offence ; we all

know that if the battle had been won then, defeat would have ensued upon some subsequent conflict; yet we still sympathise with the grief then felt and now remembered concerning the first lost battle. We have now to hear about the two other acquaintances:

"The great Destroyer, whose awful shadow it was that had silenced me, came near me—but never, so as to be distinctly seen and remembered, during my tender years. There flits dimly before me the image of a little girl, whose name even I have forgotten, a school-mate whom we missed one day, and were told that she had died. But what death was I never had any very distinct idea, until one day I climbed the low stone wall of the old burial-ground and mingled with a group that were looking into a very deep, long, narrow hole, dug down through the green sod, down through the brown loam, down through the yellow gravel, and there at the bottom was an oblong red box, and a still, sharp, white face of a young man seen through an opening at one end of it. When the lid was closed, and the gravel and stones rattled down pell-mell, and the woman in black, who was crying and wringing her hands, went off with the other mourners, and left him, then I felt I had seen Death, and should never forget him.

"One other acquaintance I made at an earlier period of life than the habit of romancers authorises—Love, of course. She was a famous beauty after-

wards. I am satisfied that many children rehearse their parts in the drama of life before they have shed all their milk-teeth. I think I won't tell the story of the golden blonde. I suppose everybody has had his childish fancies; but sometimes they are passionate impulses, which anticipate all the tremulous emotions belonging to the later period. Most children remember seeing and adoring an angel before they were a dozen years old."

In what has gone before we have the embryo author's introductions to Sin, Death, and Love. In listening to the story of them, we have gleaned many ideas concerning his childhood, and have obtained the key to those early thoughts, which, ripened by experience and enlarged by extended observation, form the ground-work of his later writings: which writings are the expression not of the childish fancies, but of a great teacher's lessons, by which and through which he warns us against Sin, shews us in what way we may overcome the fear of Death, and communicates an exceedingly beautiful, true, and pure ideal of Love.

With one or two more examples from Dr. Holmes' works respecting his childhood, we must bring to a close this portion of the brief biography—which by the way, is assuming very much the appearance of *auto*-biography. Here is an amusing incident, such as we all can sympathise with and good-naturedly laugh at:

"The hat is a vulnerable point of the artificial integument. I learned this in early boyhood. I was once equipped in a hat of Leghorn straw, having a brim of much wider dimensions than were usual at that time, and sent to school in that portion of my native town which lies nearest to this metropolis.* On my way I was met by a 'Port-Chuck,' as we used to call the young gentlemen of that locality, and the following dialogue ensued :—

"*The Port-Chuck.*—Hullo, you-sir, joo know th' wuz gōn-to be a race to-morrah ?

"*Myself.*—No. Who's gōn-to run, 'n' where's't gōn-to be ?

"*The Port-Chuck.*—Squire Mico 'n' Doctor Williams, round the brim o' your hat.

"These two much-respected gentlemen being the oldest inhabitants at that time, and the alleged race-course being out of the question, the Port-Chuck also winking and thrusting his tongue into his cheek, I perceived that I had been trifled with, and the effect has been to make me sensitive and observant respecting this article of dress ever since."

Another school-boy reminiscence is the following :

"It is by little things that we know ourselves ; a soul would very probably mistake itself for another, when once disembodied, were it not for individual

* Boston, Mass., U.S. America.

experiences, which differ from those of others only in details seemingly trifling. All of us have been thirsty thousands of times, and felt, with Pindar, that water was the best of things. I alone, as I think, of all mankind, remember one particular pailful of water, flavored with the white pine of which the pail was made, and the brown mug out of which one Edmund, a red-faced and curly-haired boy, was averred to have bitten a fragment in his haste to drink; it being then high summer, and little full-blooded boys feeling very warm and porous in the low-'studded' school-room where dame Prentiss, dead and gone, ruled over young children, many of whom are old ghosts now and have known Abraham for twenty or thirty years of our mortal time."

There is another "recollection," recorded by our author, which throws some light on the associations of his childhood, and is as follows:

"There was a sound, in itself so sweet, and so connected with one of those simple and curious superstitions of childhood of which I have spoken, that I can never cease to cherish a sad sort of love for it.—Let me tell the superstitious fancy first. The Puritan 'Sabbath,' as everybody knows, began at 'sundown' on Saturday evening. To such observance of it I was born and bred. As the large, round disk of day declined, a stillness, a solemnity, a somewhat melancholy hush, came over us all. It was time

for work to cease, and for playthings to be put away. The world of active life passed into the shadow of an eclipse, not to emerge until the sun should sink again beneath the horizon.

"It was in this stillness of the world without, and of the soul within, that the pulsating lullaby of the evening crickets used to make itself most distinctly heard, so that I well remember I used to think that the purring of these little creatures, which mingled with the batrachian hymns from the neighboring swamp, *was peculiar to Saturday evenings.* I don't know that anything could give a clearer idea of the quieting and subduing effect of the old habit of observance of what was considered holy time, than this strange, childish fancy."

Other glimpses of the child-life of our author abound in his writings; but those we have selected give us a very good idea of him as he was in that interesting period, when the roots of being are becoming stronger day by day and able better and better still to bear up the sap which afterwards is to form the life of sundry branches and leaves. It is note-worthy, that observance of the Puritans regarding the Sabbath: and doubtless those enforced periods of quiet were of eminent service in concentrating the childish thought and making it strong and vigorous.

We observe that young Oliver Wendell Holmes used his powers of seeing and thinking at an early

age: and this makes all the difference to a man. If he have struggled through a purblind, indifferent childhood and youth, and then be awakened to what is going on in the world about him, he will scarce ever get his eyes and ears well open: and the best we can say for him is, "better late than never." But he who from his earliest years has seen into things and thought about them—even if, at first, only in a childish way—has already in him much of the material which goes to make a great man. That this was so with our author, has doubtless much to do with the success now enjoyed by him, and which he has so well earned. That "the child is father to the man" has, in this case, received one of its many verifications, in one of the many modes in which it may be verified.

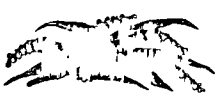
The study of this child-life is exceedingly agreeable; its aspect is as that of the good foundation prepared for the stately building to be erected upon it; or it may be likened to well-prepared outline, into which the detail may afterwards be worked, without the necessity of erasing faulty lines or slurring them over. The eye is satisfied with the prospect, and prepared by it for the grace and nobility of life which follow.

Dr. Holmes retained in after years a very vivid recollection of the home of his childhood: and his writings often contain reference to the gambrel-roofed house, and to his having been born and bred amidst

books. He seems never tired of going back in thought to early scenes: and in one of his poems is an apostrophe to home, which is one of the finest of its kind in our language. With it we will close this chapter.

"Home of our childhood! How affection clings
And hovers round thee with her seraph wings!
Dearer thy hills, though clad in autumn brown,
Than fairest summits which the cedars crown!
Sweeter the fragrance of thy summer breeze
Than all Arabia breathes along the seas!
The stranger's gale wafts home the exile's sigh,
For the heart's temple is its own blue sky.

"O happiest they, whose early love unchanged,
Hopes undissolved, and friendship unestranged,
Tired of their wandering, still can deign to see
Love, hopes, and friendship centering all in thee!"



CHAPTER III.

THE BRIEF BIOGRAPHY CONTINUED.

"A life that all the Muses deck'd
With gifts of grace, that might express
All-comprehensive tenderness,
All-subtilising intellect." *Tennyson.*

THESE lines, taken from that half-mournful, half-hopeful wailing of sorrow and expectation, which has found poetic expression in that affectionate tribute to a departed friend by our Poet-laureate, entitled "In Memoriam," if shifted from the past tense to the present, would fitly designate the subject of this brief biography. And in this continuation of our grateful task, we hope to shew the first-fruits of the budding manhood, which grew out of the childhood we have already studied; and the opening of that life, which is so eminently graced by an "all-comprehensive tenderness," and an intellect which is keen to observe and meditate, and swift and true in imparting knowledge and wisdom gained from observation and meditation.

In the year 1829, Oliver Wendell Holmes graduated

at Harvard University. He was then twenty years of age. At the same age he began writing verse. These two facts are noteworthy. He was *poetical:* he was also *practical.* We shall have something to say in a special chapter as to the poetry: therefore will not dwell on it here. But note the fact that this was no sentimental rhymster, fit only to string couplets together; but one who graduated in his University at twenty. He, in short, obeyed *in spirit* the injunction he afterwards urged upon a very troublesome class of milk-and-water versifiers: namely, "that writing verse should be an incidental occupation only, not interfering with the hoe, the needle, the lapstone, or the ledger."

We now look upon our young graduate as a professional student. He studied the law for one year, in the Law School of Harvard University, under Judge Story, probably bearing in mind the opinion of our own legal luminary, Sir William Blackstone, that a competent knowledge of the laws of that society in which he may live, is the proper accomplishment of every gentleman and scholar; a highly useful, almost essential, part of a liberal and polite education. But it was to the healing of bodily ailments, rather than the argument and adjustment of legal rights and wrongs of contending parties, that he looked as his chosen profession. He therefore studied medicine. This he did for between four and five years, chiefly

in Boston and Paris. In his writings there are choice scraps of autobiography relating to this period of life. Some are avowedly such: others are incorporated with his delineations of his various characters. Perhaps some of the real scraps of auto-biography will be interesting here.

Talking at "the breakfast-table" (in the "Autocrat") Dr. Holmes says:

"I used very often, when coming home from my morning's work at one of the public institutions of Paris, to step in at the dear old church of St. Etienne du Mont. The tomb of St. Genevieve, surrounded by burning candles and votive tablets, was there; the mural tablet of Jacobus Benignus Winslow was there: there was a noble organ with carved figures; the pulpit was borne on the oaken shoulders of a stooping Samson; and there was a marvellous staircase like a coil of lace. These things I mention from memory, but not all of them together impressed me so much as an inscription on a small slab of marble fixed in one of the walls. It told how this church of St. Stephen was repaired and beautified in the year 16**, and how, during the celebration of its reopening, two girls of the parish (*filles de la paroisse*) fell from the gallery, carrying a part of the balustrade with them, to the pavement, but by a miracle escaped uninjured. Two young girls, nameless; but real presences to my imagination, as much as when they came fluttering

down on the tiles with a cry that outscreamed the sharpest treble in the Te Deum. (Look at Carlyle's article on Boswell, and see how he speaks of the poor young woman Johnson talked with in the streets one evening). All the crowd gone but these two "filles de la paroisse"—gone as utterly as the dresses they wore, as the shoes that were on their feet, as the bread and meat that were in the market on that day."

In another place, speaking of voices, and how some had produced strange effects upon him: and how that he had heard some very sweet voices, he remarks:—

"Ah, but I must not forget that dear little child I saw and heard in a French hospital. Between two and three years old. Fell out of her chair and snapped both thigh bones. Lying in bed, patient, gentle. Rough students round her, some in white aprons, looking fearfully business-like; but the child placid, perfectly still. I spoke to her, and the blessed creature answered me in a voice of such heavenly sweetness, with that reedy thrill in it which you have heard in the thrush's even-song, that I hear it at this moment, while I am writing, so many, many years afterwards. *C'est tout comme un serin*, said the French student at my side."

Do you not, in the relation of that incident, recognise the "all-comprehensive tenderness" which we have claimed for our author? We can almost see him standing by the hospital-cot, "weeping inwardly"—as

he so finely expresses it elsewhere—with pity for the dear little sufferer, who lies before him so still, and gentle, and patient: and, doubtless, longing with longing inexpressible to do something to alleviate her pain. Yet, he was no timid, cowardly student: his eminence in his profession shows how he had studied: his writings shew how he learned to put an iron restraint on his own feelings always, so that he might have his faculties unshackled and free to do the best for his patient. In all, however, he had the tender heart which could sympathise, and which had the happy effect also of keeping him from indulging in scientific cruelty: as witness this remark of his:—

"In the long catalogue of scientific cruelties there is hardly anything quite so painful to think of as that experiment of putting an animal under the bell of an air-pump and exhausting the air from it. [I never saw the accursed trick performed. *Laus Deo.*]"

Our student appears to have been interested in the literature of his profession, and to have collected the writings of some of its notable members; for, referring to a statement of his concerning medicine, at which he anticipates some will take offence, he says:—

"—You don't know what I mean, indignant and not unintelligent country-practitioner? Then you don't know the history of medicine—and that is not my fault. But don't expose yourself in any outbreak of eloquence; for, by the mortar in which Anaxarchus

was pounded! I did not bring home Schenckius and Forestus and Hildanus, and all the old folios in calf and vellum I will show you, to be bullied by the proprietor of a 'Wood and Bache,' and a shelf of peppered sheepskin reprints by Philadelphia Editors."

Those who would like to know more of Dr. Holmes as a student had better read his novel "Elsie Venner," in which (amongst other characters of whom we shall have something to say hereafter) will be found his beau-ideal of a medical student, Bernard Langdon, the original of whom to a large extent, if our judgment fails us not, was our author himself.

Before closing this further portion of the brief biography, let us return to the parenthesis we just now quoted in which reference is made to Carlyle, and from which it appears that Dr. Holmes has read Carlyle's works. We can only faintly conceive the effect this must have had upon him. Studied in the light of their respective works they are very similar in their mode of thought; and there must have been a grand flashing of high intellect upon high intellect when the American (the *British* American as I like to think of him) read the weighty utterances of the English writer. We observe this, however, that whilst Dr. Holmes attains very nearly to the same height of conception and the same depth of thought as Mr. Carlyle does, the former has a far more graceful expression than the latter. Nevertheless, in both we

get the same prime element, that of looking into things, and not at the show of things. Perhaps it is a mere fancy to connect all this with a quotation: yet it has seemed to the present writer that some of the noble sentiments of our author may have taken their rise from the time when, probably as a student, Dr. Holmes first met with the quotation to which he makes reference in the following remark of his; which quotation he deemed worthy to be printed (as we print it) in capital letters:

"I know nothing in English or any other literature more admirable than that sentiment of Sir Thomas Brown—'EVERY MAN TRULY LIVES, SO LONG AS HE ACTS HIS NATURE, OR SOME WAY MAKES GOOD THE FACULTIES OF HIMSELF.'"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRIEF BIOGRAPHY CONCLUDED.

Our remarks in this chapter will deal particularly with more personal information concerning Dr. Holmes than we have yet given.

We pass over his works for the present, as we shall name them further on, and discuss their merits fully. His profession as we have seen is that of medicine: in which profession, it is our pleasing duty to state, he has achieved a great reputation. He was Professor of Anatomy and Physics at Dartmouth College, in Canada, in 1839 and 1840: and he has been Professor of the same sciences in the Medical School of Harvard University (his *alma mater*) from the year 1847 to the present time; except that Physiology has been separated and made a distinct Professorship within a few years.

Doctor Holmes lives at Boston, Massachusetts, in the United States, making that literary capital of America his working head-quarters; but in the summer he retires to Beverly Farm, in Massachusetts,

which is a "beautiful place—ocean on one side of it; the finest forest of pine and oak, and the most wonderful variety of surface,—hill, valley, rocks, meadows on the other." Here he gathers strength and inspiration, and finds opportunity for the execution of those lesser works which gather about a busy public man in busy seasons. He is married, very happily so, and enjoys domestic felicity such as it is a joy to one to mention, considering how many there are of our gifted and talented men who mistake in the great business of choosing a wife, and find themselves bound to one who is a burden and a care; rather than united to one who is a loving and helpful partner. He has three children: two of whom are sons, members of the legal profession, the other a daughter. All these are well married also. We could not but imagine that the family circle, having so gifted and genial a head, is an extremely happy and cheerful one. One would like to embroider upon this a little; but having stated the simple fact of domestic happiness—and it being a fact; not a mere compliment—we think it well to leave the detail to the reader's own imagination.

As to circumstances of fortune, our author is well off: being removed far above want; although not too rich. Indeed, he seems to have attained that very comfortable condition, in which one is oppressed neither with the straitening and wearing inconve-

niences of poverty, nor the harassing cares of exceeding riches. A few verses from his poem on "Contentment" will convey as good an idea as any of his circumstances, most of the luxuries therein mentioned—together with others in keeping with them—being within his reach. These are the verses :

"Plain food is quite enough for me ;
Three courses are as good as ten ;—
If nature can subsist on three,
Thank Heaven for three. Amen !
I always thought cold victuals nice ;—
My *choice* would be vanilla-ice.

"I care not much for gold or land ;—
Give me a mortgage here and there—
Some good bank-stock—some note of hand,
Or trifling railroad share ;
I only ask that fortune send
A *little* more than I shall spend.

"Jewels are baubles ; 'tis a sin
To care for such unfruitful things ;
One good sized diamond in a pin,
Some, *not so large*, in rings,
A ruby, and a pearl or so,
Will do for me—I laugh at show.

"Of pictures I should like to own
Titians and Raphaels three or four—

I love so much their style and tone—
One Turner, and no more—
(A landscape—foreground golden dirt,
The sunshine painted with a squirt).

" Of books but few—some fifty score
For daily use and bound for wear ;
The rest upon an upper floor !
Some *little* luxury *there*
Of red morocco's gilded gleam,
And vellum rich as country cream."

Of course, with these surroundings, and some others we need not quote, as these are sufficiently characteristic, life is something more than tolerable; especially when domestic felicity—as in the present case—is added unto them.

Our author is of a quiet temperament, and moderate and temperate in his habits. Without being convivial, he is yet social and goes to a dinner party now and then, at which of course, he sometimes helps the talking a little. It must be a treat indeed to have the Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table your companion at the festive board, to beguile the time with sayings both witty and wise.

As to religious observances, Dr. Holmes is careful, attending divine service (at "King's Chapel," the foundation of which was laid by Governor Shirley in 1749) regularly, and "believing more than some

and less than others." Which last clause more widely extended means that he has a warm Christian faith, a faith which enables him to recognise in God a benevolent ruler and watchful Creator, working in the manifold operations of Nature for the benefit of man: and further such a sense of the divine mercy and love as will not permit him to believe what some of our cold-blooded creeds express concerning poor erring humanity, and the limbos to which some grim theologians so glibly (in words only, thank Heaven!) consign them.

The following remarks, in the "Autocrat," upon receiving the present of "the loveliest English edition of Keble's *Christian Year*," will give a further idea of Dr. Holmes' religious feeling:—

"I opened it, when it came to the *Fourth Sunday in Lent*, and read that angelic poem, sweeter than anything I can remember since Xavier's 'My God, I love Thee.' *I am not a Churchman—I don't believe in planting oaks in flower-pots;* but such a poem as 'The Rosebud' makes one's heart a proselyte to the culture it grows from. Talk about it as much as you like—one's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in religion. A man should be a gentleman in his hymns and prayers; the fondness for 'scenes,' among vulgar saints, contrasts so meanly with that—

'God only and good angels look
Behind the blissful scene'—

and that other:

> 'He could not trust his melting soul
> But in his Maker's sight'—

that I hope some of them will see this, and read the poem, and profit by it."

We may observe upon this that not only "vulgar saints," but all who love sweet poetry should read that poem of Keble's.

As to personal appearance, Dr. Holmes begins now to show signs of age, being in his sixty-ninth year. We have before us a good photograph which pourtrays him—if we may adopt a mode of description more usual in America than in England—as being somewhat smooth-faced, straight-haired, and plain-featured; but with unmistakeable signs of the intelligence within in the still fine eyes. There is also a general bearing of dignity and manliness in the way the figure is posed. Of course a photograph conveys but a poor idea of *expression* at best; but the face appears bright and mobile and is doubtless capable of expressing all the varied shades of feeling which are evoked by the "all-comprehensive tenderness" and the great intellect we have claimed for its owner. Dr. Holmes is of moderate stature; but has a good *physique:* the result, perhaps, of the exercise of which he has freely partaken: he having been devoted, amongst other things, to riding, walking, boxing, and rowing.

Dr. Holmes has of course met with many celebrated persons in his time, and is now the friend of Longfellow and other kindred spirits of the new world; but he has not been in the habit of parading his great acquaintances in his works. One example in which he has done this we may however mention, as it is interesting to us. In "Mechanism in Thought and Morals," he refers to Charles Dickens, and mentions how that on one of the last times that he met him, the great novelist said to him, 'I am very human.' We see here the confidence of our favorite English writer in one from whom he knew he would get sympathy.

Our author mentions also, in "The Poet at the Breakfast-Table," how that the few Royal princes he had happened to know were very easy people to get along with, and had not half the "social knee-action" he had often seen in the collapsed dowagers who lifted their eyebrows at him in his earlier years. We have in this a good-natured comment upon the despicable fault some indulge, in affecting grand manners towards those they please to consider their inferiors.

Altogether, and as a general summary, we may say that in Dr. Holmes we have a man who is a perfect gentleman, genial, true, and honorable; and who is possessed of one of the greatest intellectual natures which America has produced. His name will

doubtless, go down to posterity as one of the great thinkers and one of the most graceful writers of our age: his delineations of life being most faithful and true; his morality, pure and noble; his thought far-reaching and often profound; and his diction in almost all cases, being most polished and graceful.

We ought not to conclude this chapter without mentioning that Dr. Holmes, besides being a physician, prose-writer, and poet, is also a lecturer. He is indeed one of the most popular and valued of American lecturers, especially in some departments of medical science. It can easily be imagined from this that he leads a useful life, and that he, not only in "SOME WAY," but in many ways, "MAKES GOOD THE FACULTIES OF HIMSELF."

Thus we end the brief biography, and proceed now to note and discuss critically the works of Oliver Wendell Holmes.

CHAPTER V.

A CATALOGUE.

BEFORE dashing into this chapter (if one may with modesty assume that this work is being perused with avidity) the reader had better consider that it pretends only to be a catalogue, and that catalogues are dry things. However, those more thoughtful readers, to whom our author applies the generic term of "preface-readers" will probably find something interesting in the list which follows, and which enumerates all the principal works of Dr. Holmes.*

1836. "Poems." Many Editions since published.
„ "Boylston Prize Dissertations."
1840. "Essay on Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever"
1842. "Lectures on Homoeopathy and its kindred Delusions."
1857. "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table." This was published in the Atlantic Monthly.
1858. "The Professor at the Breakfast-Table." Also published in the Atlantic Monthly.

* As this list was kindly communicated to the writer by Dr. Holmes himself, its accuracy may be relied upon.

The two last-named works—together with another of kindred character, though not so popularly known, entitled, "The Poet at the Breakfast-Table"—are founded upon an excellent plan for introducing discussions upon "any and every" subject. The writer is supposed to lead the conversation at the table of an American boarding-house, the other boarders joining in. The "Autocrat" and the "Professor" (as they are shortly called by those who love them) are probably the works which—together with the "Poet"—will sustain Dr. Holmes' reputation, in a greater degree than any of the others.

We now resume the list:

1859. "Elsie Venner." This novel, and another written later, entitled "The Guardian Angel," deal with the extent of the moral responsibility of those who commit error, by reason of physical weakness. Perhaps the following extract from the preface to the latter story, will throw a little light upon them; which will suffice until we examine them in detail. "If I called these two stories Studies of the Reflex Function in its higher sphere, I should frighten away all but the Professors and the learned ladies. If I should proclaim that they were protests against the scholastic tendency to shift the total responsibility of all human action from the Infinite to the

finite, I might alarm the jealousy of the cabinet-keepers of our doctrinal museums."

1861. "Currents and Counter-Currents in Medical Science."

1864. "Songs in many Keys."

1870. "Mechanism in Thought and Morals."

1875. "Songs of many Seasons."

Besides these, many other Essays, Addresses, &c.

Here we have a goodly field for critical discussion. Science, Religion, Morals, Poetry: the heavy guns of literature for serious study, and the lighter trifles for the spare minutes, with many of varying grades between them; all are here in rich profusion. To our critical discussion we will therefore now proceed, asking our reader's indulgence for and forbearance with all such shortcomings as arise from our unworthiness and insufficiency for the task.

CHAPTER VI.

PERTAINING TO POETRY.

"Fountain of Harmony! Thou Spirit blest,
By whom the troubled waves of earthly sound
Are gathered into order, such as best
Some high-souled bard in his enchanted round
May compass, Power divine! O spread thy wing,
Thy dove-like wing that makes confusion fly,
Over my dark, void spirit, summoning
New worlds of music, strains that may not die."

In the verses above quoted from the dedication to Keble's Christian Year, is concealed one of the best definitions of poetry. It is a poet's "confession of faith," and it fits in with our own belief that poetry is something which is *sung*, and which should contain '*new* worlds of music.' We must first of all have the poet—the maker—who is gifted with a clearer vision than most of us, a vision which comprehends nature, and the good—or God—in nature, and the rule—which also is God—in nature, and the life and its purpose which make up nature. Then he must *make* for us new songs: all which songs must be

either of new truths, with keen-edged, arrow-like motion and measure, to sink deep into our inmost consciousness and move our whole being ; or of old truths which have failed to strike us before, dressed up anew and decked with all the grace he can command from his great poetic soul, in order that now they may reach us. Carlyle says, "All old poems, Homer's and the rest, are authentically songs. I would say, in strictness, that all right poems are :" and then he adds, in his candid, out-spoken manner, " that whatsoever is not *sung* is properly no poem, but a piece of prose cramped into jingling lines,—to the great injury of the grammar, to the great grief of the reader, for most part !"

The poet, then, is a Singer, Revealer, Teacher, all combined in one harmonious whole. Whoso rhymes without teaching is no poet ; whoso gives us mere verses without a new truth or new beauty of an old truth to form the marrow of them is no poet ; but he who sings to us in harmonious measure—now smooth, perchance ; now rushing like a tumultuous flood with the mighty force of passion—words which teach us new truth and new beauties of truth, he is a poet, such work of his is poetry. It is subject to such conditions that we claim the title of poet for Oliver Wendell Holmes, and it will be found that his poetical work is able to bear the test of all that we have asserted poetry should be. Take here

one example. Looking at the shell of a Nautilus, which to less gifted natures would be but a shell;—pretty, perhaps, nothing more—he with his poetic vision sees a song therein, which he has entitled, "The Chambered Nautilus." After describing how the occupant of the little shell—according to the wont of his species—built each year a new spiral of his coiling home, which was larger than the last year's spiral: and how he went on year by year building in a widening spiral, and each year living in the enlarged home, and giving up the smaller one of last year, he—the poet—hears a voice—the voice of his poetic nature—which sings:

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine out-grown shell by life's unresting sea!"

He, however, is more modest for himself than we are for him, and whilst he recognises the high ideal of poetry we have endeavoured to indicate, he thinks it beyond his reach. Thus in one of his early poems we find the following beautiful expression of a poetic truth that had flashed upon him, which shows at once his clear comprehension of what song should be:

"If to embody in a breathing word
Tones that the spirit trembled when it heard;
To fix the image all unveiled and warm,
And carve in language its ethereal form,
So pure, so perfect, that the lines express
No meagre shrinking, no unlaced excess;
To feel that art, in living truth, has taught
Ourselves, reflected in the sculptured thought;—
If this alone bestow the right to claim
The deathless garland and the sacred name;
Then none are poets, save the saints on high,
Whose harps can murmur all that words deny."

Comment upon this is needless. The thought is simply sublime. In this example, and in many others which might be given, the poet is brimming over with sacred truth, for which he feels words cannot be found. It reveals to us a nature so deep, so extensive, that language is insufficient to utter all its longings: and in which there is much left to be expressed in that blissful time when the harp shall murmur what words now deny.

But, as we have already remarked, Dr. Holmes is practical as well as poetical: practical in his poetry, and he is not ashamed to own it. When asked, 'at the Breakfast-Table,' whether he would not confess at least to using a rhyming dictionary, he replied:

"I would as lief use that as any other dictionary,

but I don't want it. When a word comes up fit to end a line with, I can *feel* all the rhymes in the language that are fit to go with it, without naming them. I know all the polygamous words, and all the monogamous ones, and all the unmarrying ones,—the whole lot that have no mates,—as soon as I hear their names called. Sometimes I run over a string of rhymes, but, generally speaking, it is strange what a short list it is of those that are good for anything. That is the pitiful side of all rhymed verse. Take two such words as *home* and *world*. What can you do with *chrome* or *loam* or *gnome* or *tome?* You have *dome*, *foam*, and *roam*, and not much more to use in your *pome*,* as some of our fellow-countrymen call it. As for *world*, you know that in all human probability somebody or something will be *hurled* into or out of it: its clouds may be *furled* or its grass *impearled:* possibly something may be *whirled* or *curled*, or even *swirled*,—one of Leigh Hunt's words, which with *lush*, one of Keat's, is an important part of the stock in trade of some dealers in rhyme."

In another place he says also:

"Poets, like painters, their machinery claim,
And verse bestows the varnish and the frame."

Still, he is careful in maintaining, what the best

* 'Pome' is a name given in America to a baked cake of maize or Indian meal, about the size of an apple, but seems to be used here in another sense.

definitions of poetry teach, that the poet is moved, or has a revelation made to him: and so we find in his treatise upon mechanism in thought and morals, the following truth laid down:

"The poet always recognises a dictation *ab extra;* and we hardly think it a figure of speech when we talk of his inspiration."

He illustrates this truth by observing that frequently the poet will sit down to pen some gay conceit; and then find his eyes suffused with tears, and his spirit moved, and write something quite different to his first purpose. This we think is a very correct way of putting the case.

Dr. Holmes frequently refers to ideas which strike him as to his literary work, as well as to those he has concerning general matters, and often he takes us behind the scenes, as it were, of the poet's manufactory: those comments suggested by the remark as to a rhyming dictionary, for example. He also gives us some really good hints as to literary work generally. Here is one. In the "Autocrat" he says:

"I want to make a literary confession now, which I believe nobody has made before me. You know very well that I write verses sometimes. Of course I write some lines or passages which are better than others: some which, compared with the others, might be called relatively excellent. It is in the nature of things that I should consider these relatively

excellent lines or passages as absolutely good. So much may be pardoned to humanity. Now, I never wrote a 'good' line in my life, but the moment after it was written, it seemed a hundred years old. Very commonly I had a sudden conviction that I had seen it somewhere. Possibly I may have sometimes unconsciously stolen it, but I do not remember that I ever once detected any historical truth in these sudden convictions of the antiquity of my new thought or phrase. I have learned utterly to distrust them, and never allow them to bully me out of a thought or line.

"This is the philosophy of it. Any new formula which suddenly emerges in our consciousness has its roots in long trains of thought; it is virtually old when it first makes its appearance among the recognized growths of our intellect. Any crystalline group of musical words has had a long and still period to form in."

Again, in the "Autocrat" (which was written before he had published a novel) in reply to a question from one of the boarders "at the Breakfast-Table," why he did not write a story, or a novel, or something of that kind, he replies as follows:

"That every articulately-speaking human being has in him stuff for *one* novel in three volumes duodecimo has long been with me a cherished belief . . . Now, an author's first novel is naturally drawn, to

a great extent, from his personal experiences—that is, it is a literal copy of nature under various slight disguises . . . I as an individual of the human family, could write one novel or story at any rate, if I would.

"Why don't I, then? Well, there are several reasons against it. In the first place, *I should tell all my secrets, and I maintain that verse is the proper medium for such revelations.* Rhythm and rhyme and the harmonies of musical language, the play of fancy, the fire of imagination, the flashes of passion, so hide the nakedness of a heart laid open, that hardly any confession, transfigured in the luminous halo of poetry, is reproached as self-exposure. A beauty shows herself under the chandeliers, protected by the glitter of her diamonds, with such a broad snow-drift of white arms and shoulders laid bare, that, were she unadorned and in plain calico, she would be unendurable—in the opinion of the ladies."

Notwithstanding the theory here playfully given forth, our author has written *two* novels, to which we shall refer later on. He has told a great many of his secrets in them, though not more perhaps than in his poems.

One of the best pieces of advice ever given to those poor, infatuated beings, who *imagine* they are poets is that extracted from the "Autocrat," to which we incidentally referred in the brief biography. After

remarking that the habit of chewing on rhymes without sense and soul to match them is, like that of using any other narcotic, at once a proof of feebleness, and that a young man can get rid of the presumption against him that he is an inferior person by his writing verses, only by convincing us that they are verses worth writing, he says:

"I would always treat any given young person passing through the meteoric showers which rain down on the brief period of adolescence, with great tenderness. God forgive us if we ever speak harshly to young creatures on the strength of these ugly truths: and so, sooner or later, smite some tender-souled poet or poetess on the lips who might have sung the world into sweet trances, had we not silenced the matin song in its first low breathings! Just as my heart yearns over the unloved, just so it sorrows for the ungifted who are doomed to the pangs of an undeceived self-estimate. . . One doesn't like to be cruel—and yet one hates to lie. Therefore one softens down the ugly central truth of donkeyism—recommends study of good models, and that *writing verse should be an incidental occupation only, not interfering with the hoe, the needle, the lapstone, or the ledger.*"

If it were possible to bring home this advice to many of our fancied poets—those with the *will* and *desire* to utter music, but without the *ability* to do

so—how many importunities to take subscription-copies friends and acquaintances would be spared—how the "two-penny" boxes of the book-stalls would be emptied! It is pitiful this jingling together of bad prose into lines. It is wonderful so sensitive a nature as that of Dr. Holmes can be so patient with it. All honor to him for his great sympathy; for with most of us (to quote Carlyle again) "precisely as we love the true song, and are charmed by it as by something divine, so shall we hate the false song, and account it a mere wooden noise, a thing hollow, superfluous."

It will be a relief to turn from this to a little true poetry, a song by our author, which should bring comfort to those, who, having high aspirations and noble aims, cannot always reach them. The truth embodied in the song is suggested—as many truths are—by a simple matter: in this case it is a crooked footpath. After describing its devious turnings the poet sings thus:—

"Perhaps some lover trod the way
With shaking knees and leaping heart,—
And so it often runs away
With sinuous sweep or sudden start.

"Or one, perchance, with clouded brain
From some unholy banquet reeled,—
And since, our devious steps maintain
His track across the trodden field.

" Nay, deem not thus,—*no earth-born will*
Could ever trace a faultless line;
Our truest steps are human still,—
To walk unswerving were divine!

" Truants from love, we dream of wrath;—
Or rather, let us trust the more!
Through all the wanderings of the path,
We still can see our Father's door."

We do not pretend that all Dr. Holme's verse is poetry: much is not so, and does not pretend to be so. There are many pretty ballads amongst his works, and other metrical scraps: but all bear the impress of the master hand which acts in conjunction with the poet's soul, and in all the serious poems, and in most of the humorous ones too, the language is well chosen as well as the metaphor.

As a hymn-writer, so far as can be judged from the few examples he has given us, he is only equalled by some of the choicest of those who in the last century made hymn-writing almost their sole poetical exercise. We give as examples of our author's great power in this direction the two hymns in the closing sections of the "Professor." One is supposed to be sung by Iris to the "little gentleman" (of whom you shall be told something in a future chapter) as the latter lay upon his death-bed. It is entitled—

HYMN OF TRUST.

"O Love Divine, that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear,
On Thee we cast each earth-born care,
We smile at pain while Thou art near!

"Though long the weary way we tread,
And sorrow crown each lingering year,
No path we shun, no darkness dread,
Our hearts still whispering, Thou art near!

"When drooping pleasure turns to grief,
And trembling faith is changed to fear,
The murmuring wind, the quivering leaf
Shall softly tell us, Thou art near!

"On Thee we fling our burdening woe,
O Love Divine, for ever dear,
Content to suffer, while we know,
Living and dying, Thou art near!"

There are few verses which so fitly express as these do that living, hopeful faith in a divine love, without which life would be an intolerable burden, and death the dread portal of an unknown, awful region beyond, towards which the shrinking soul would move with a terror no words can define.

The other hymn concludes the "Professor," and is introduced thus:—

"Thanks to all those friends who from time to time

have sent their messages of kindly recognition and fellow-feeling! Peace to all such as may have been vexed in spirit by any utterance these pages have repeated! They will, doubtless, forget for the moment the difference in the hues of truth we look at through our human prisms, and join in singing (inwardly) this hymn to the Source of the light we all need to lead us, and the warmth which alone can make us all brothers.

A SUN-DAY HYMN.

"Lord of all being! throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star:
Centre and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!

"Sun of our life, Thy quickening ray
Sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, Thy softened light
Cheers the long watches of the night.

"Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch Thy mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine!

"Lord of all life, below, above,
Whose light is truth, Whose warmth is love,
Before Thy ever-blazing throne
We ask no lustre of our own.

"Grant us Thy truth to make us free,
And kindling hearts that burn for Thee,
Till all Thy living altars claim
One holy light, one heavenly flame."

Dr. Holmes' capacity for sacred poetry is equally well marked in "The Living Temple," also called "The Anatomist's Hymn;" which is introduced thus:

"Not in the world of light alone
Where God has built His blazing throne,
Nor yet alone in earth below,
With belted seas that come and go,
And endless isles of sunlit green,
Is all thy Maker's glory seen:
Look in upon thy wondrous frame—
Eternal Wisdom still the same!

Then follows a description of the human body, the breathing, the blood, the muscles and nerves, hearing, and the action of the brain; all lucid not only with poetical description: but with technical light also. Lastly there comes the closing thought—in which is embodied a foreshadowing of the time when no longer "the smooth, soft air, with pulse-like waves" shall pass through to give the blood its brightening purple and new vitality: and when that blood shall no longer leap forth "in unnumbered crossing tides," nor "creep back to find the throbbing heart:" when

light, and sound, and will shall all have left the body :—this is the closing thought, which follows :

"O Father ! grant Thy love divine
To make these mystic temples Thine !
When wasting age and wearying strife
Have sapped the leaning walls of life,
When darkness gathers over all,
And the last tottering pillars fall,
Take the poor dust Thy mercy warms,
And mould it into heavenly forms !"

Enough has been quoted and written probably to shew the reader that Oliver Wendell Holmes is really a poet—a poet of the first rank. His only fault—if it be a fault—is that he has written so much poetry that one is beset with difficulty as to what is best fitted for special mention and quotation. Again—in another point of view—the abundance of good things is perhaps a little apt to engender indifference as to their merit. However, this we may confidently say—whoever reads his poetry, whether the pieces interspersed thoughout his prose works, or those collected into separate volumes, will be amply repaid. The thought is always so pure and true, the style always so graceful and worthy, and the rich and ripe genius of the author always so apparent, that their perusal must be attended not only with profit but with real pleasure. I know no specific more successful in

chasing away depressing thoughts, than the perusal of some of these poems. They lift one above the accidents of time and space, reveal the glory and calm which lie beyond, and bring to the soul something of that divine peace which passes understanding. They touch the chords of immortality, and awaken sweet visions of another and higher sphere of being, in which the God-like in us shall have freer and fuller scope than now. They remind us of the grand fact that we are something more than animate dust. And to do so is the poet's privilege; for, as Longfellow says:—

"*God sent His singers upon earth*
With songs of sadness and of mirth,
That they might touch the hearts of men,
And bring them back to heaven again."

CHAPTER VII.

ELSIE VENNER.

A MORE touching story than this, perchance, has never been written in modern times. Whilst it is of all-absorbing interest, and is relieved in turns by much that is witty and much that is wise; yet the pity of the reader is enchained throughout for the heroine, and the heart cannot but sorrow for her in her strange and sad affliction. And it is only when the closing scene of her life is told, and the mystic influence which has troubled her up to that time is removed, that the tears of joy prevail over those of sorrow, and we can be glad for her and happy as to her fate.

It will be but fair to the author of the story, to let those who read this review of it, know his intentions in writing it. Referring to it, in the preface to his other story ("The Guardian Angel") he says:

"It based itself upon an experiment which some thought cruel, even on paper. It imagined an alien

element introduced into the blood of a human being before that being saw the light. It showed a human nature developing itself in conflict with the ophidian characteristics and instincts impressed upon it during the pre-natal period. Whether anything like this ever happened, or was possible, mattered little: it enabled me, at any rate, to suggest the limitations of human responsibility in a simple and effective way."

He afterwards adds the following:

"Should any professional alarmist choose to confound the doctrine of limited responsibility with that which denies the existence of any self-determining power, he may be presumed to belong to the class of intellectual half-breeds, of which we have many representatives in our new country, wearing the garb of civilisation and even the gown of scholarship. If we cannot follow the automatic machinery of nature into the mental and moral world, where it plays its part as much as in the bodily functions, without being accused of laying 'all that we are evil in to a divine thrusting on,' we had better return at once to our old demonology, and reinstate the Leader of the Lower-House in his time-honored prerogatives."

With so much of explanation, we will now proceed to our review.

The story supposes a young girl of good family in an American town "of no inconsiderable pretensions" called Rockland—the good family being

one descended from English stock of high rank. The town lay at the foot of a mountain, one of the chief and most dreaded features of which was a rattlesnake ledge. The young girl—Elsie Venner—grew up very wayward and apparently malicious. She had no mother, her maternal parent's death following upon her birth. She was therefore left to the charge and keeping—so far as she would submit to them—of her father, Dudley Venner, and Sophy, an old black nurse. The older she grew the more erratic she became, throwing off all restraint and refusing to submit to any authority. She would stay out at night upon the mountain without fear, and as fearlessly approach even the dreaded rattlesnake ledge. Its terrible occupants seemed to have no power to harm her, her eyes being filled with a cold glitter and force of fascination equal to or stronger than theirs. She even showed some sort of resemblance to them. She delighted in coiling and uncoiling her trinkets, and she affected those trinkets most which were of a scaley and snake-like pattern. It was even said by some of her school-fellows that she could coil herself as easily as she could coil her trinkets.

This strange young girl developed scarcely any human affection. She called her father "Dudley," and was hardly respectful to him otherwise. She had some sort of attachment to her old nurse, but was

controlled by her to only a slight extent. A certain cousin Dick was with her as a child, and the two children grew up together for awhile. "They loved to ramble together, to build huts, to climb trees for nests, to ride the colts, to dance, to race, and to play at boys' rude games as if both were boys." They were "both handsome, wild, impetuous, unmanageable, they played and fought together like two young leopards, beautiful, but dangerous, their lawless instincts showing through all their graceful movements." The boy had been brought up in South America very roughly, he also having lost his mother. But it was found that he must be sent away from Elsie, she having bitten him in one of her quarrels—the bite being of such a nature, too, as to require the application by old Dr. Kittredge of a stick of lunar caustic.

We must introduce some of the other characters, before taking up the thread of the story.

Dudley Venner, the father, having lost his young bride under exceptionally painful circumstances, and being left with his motherless daughter Elsie, who developed her strange instincts from her birth, was much saddened, and retired into almost strict confinement to his library, leaving much of his noble old mansion-house unoccupied. He did all he could for Elsie indirectly—direct interference could not be attempted with her—but otherwise he was obliged

to leave her very much to such care as her nurse and teachers could exercise, and commit the rest to divine providence.

The hero of the story is Bernard Langdon, a young medical student, who, from straitened circumstances, was compelled to undertake instruction for a time. His first experiment in teaching was at the school attached to District No. 1, Pigwacket centre. Here he had warm work, his predecessors having proved insufficient to rule the insubordinate young rascals who were the scholars. "There were a number of well grown and pretty rough young fellows who had got the upper hand of the master, and meant to keep it." An account of the school rebellion, which we give in an abridged form from Dr. Holmes' writing, will shew the sort of man Mr. Bernard Langdon was, and—although rather a digression from the main purpose—will prove interesting reading.

After indulging in various opprobrious epithets and phrases without much effect, the rebellious boys began bolder insults. They had really no fault to find with Mr. Langdon, except that he was dressed like a gentleman, which a certain class of fellows always consider a personal insult to themselves. But the older ones were evidently plotting and more than once the warning *a'h'm!* was heard, and at last one of several dirty little scraps of paper rolled into wads was secured by the master.

"He who should have enjoyed the privilege of looking upon Mr. Bernard Langdon the next morning, when his toilet was about half-finished, would have had a very pleasant gratuitous exhibition. First he buckled the strap of his trousers pretty tightly; then he took up a pair of heavy dumb-bells, and swung them for a few minutes; then two great 'Indian clubs,' with which he enacted all sorts of impossible-looking feats. His limbs were not very large, nor his shoulders remarkably broad; but if you knew as much of the muscles as all persons who look at statues and pictures with a critical eye ought to have learned; if you knew the *trapezius*, lying diamond-shaped over the back and shoulders like a monk's cowl, or the *deltoid*, which caps the shoulder like an epaulette, or the *triceps* which furnishes the *calf* of the upper arm, or the hard-knotted *biceps*—any of the great sculptural landmarks, in fact—you would have said there was a pretty show of them beneath the white satin skin of Mr. Bernard Langdon; and if you had seen him, when he had laid down the Indian clubs, catch hold of a leather strap that hung from the beam of the old-fashioned ceiling, and lift and lower himself over and over again by his left hand alone, you might have thought it a very simple and easy thing to do until you tried to do it yourself. Mr. Bernard looked at himself with the eye of an expert. 'Pretty well!' he said; 'not so much fallen off as I expected.'

Then he set up his bolster in a very knowing sort of way, and delivered two or three blows straight as rulers and swift as winks. 'That will do,' he said.

"The master took his breakfast with a good appetite that morning, but was perhaps rather more quiet than usual. After breakfast he put on a light loose frock, instead of his usual dress-coat." He then went to school and on the way met Miss Alminy Cutter, a village girl to whom he had been introduced. "Her bright eyes were moist and her red cheeks paler than their wont, as she said, with her lips quivering,—'Oh, Mr. Langdon, them boys 'll be the death of ye, if ye don't take caär!'

"'Why, what's the matter, my dear?' said Mr. Bernard. Don't think there was anything very odd in that 'my dear' at the second interview with a village belle;—some of those women-tamers call a girl 'my dear,' after five minutes acquaintance, and it sounds all right *as they say it.* But you had not better try it at a venture.

"'I'll tell ye what's the mahterr,' she said, 'Ahbner's go'n' to car' his dog, 'n' he'll set him on ye 'z sure 'z y' 'r' alive.' This dog, named Tiger, or Tige, was a "yallah dog." "A 'yallah dog' is a large canine brute, of a dingy old-flannel color, of no particular breed, except his own, who hangs round a tavern or a butcher's shop, or trots alongside of a team, looking as if he were disgusted with the world, and the world

with him." This Tige had fight in him, but Mr. Langdon treated the matter lightly.

" 'Why, my dear little soul,' said he, 'what are you worried about? I used to play with a *bear* when I was a boy; and the bear used to hug me, and I used to kiss him,—so!' " Unfortunately, Abner Briggs, the owner of the "yallah dog," who was a disappointed suitor of Alminy's, saw the salute. Mr. Bernard Langdon went on to the school, and began the exercises.

"At half-past nine o'clock, Abner Briggs made his appearance. He was followed by his 'yallah dog,' without his muzzle, who squatted down very grimly near the door, and gave a wolfish look round the room, as if he were considering which was the plumpest boy to begin with. The young butcher, meanwhile, went to his seat, looking somewhat flushed, except round the lips, which were hardly as red as common, and set pretty sharply.

" 'Put out that dog, Abner Briggs!'—The master spoke as the captain speaks to the helmsman, when there are rocks foaming at their lips, right under his lee.

" Abner Briggs answered as the helmsman answers, when he knows he has a mutinous crew round him that mean to run the ship on the reef, and is one of the mutineers himself. 'Put him out y'rself, 'f ye a'n't afeard on him!'

"The master stepped into the aisle. The great cur showed his teeth—and the devilish instincts of his old wolf-ancestry looked out of his eyes, and flashed from his sharp tusks, and yawned in his wide mouth and deep red gullet.

"'Out with you!' the master said fiercely—and explained what he meant by a sudden flash of his foot that clashed the yellow dog's white teeth together like the springing of a bear-trap. The cur knew he had found his master at the first word and glance, as low animals on four legs, or a smaller number, always do; and the blow took him so by surprise, that it curled him up in an instant, and he went bundling out of the open school-house door with a most pitiable yelp, and his stump of a tail shut down as close as his owner ever shut the short, stubbed blade of his jacknife.

"It was time for the other cur to find who his master was.

"'Follow your dog, Abner Briggs!' said Master Langdon.

"'I'll go when I'm ready,' he said,—'n' I guess I won't go afore I'm ready.'

"'You're ready now,' said Master Langdon, turning up his cuffs, so that the little boys noticed the yellow gleam of a pair of gold sleeve-buttons, once worn by Colonel Percy Wentworth, famous in the old French war.

"Abner Briggs did not apparently think he was

ready, at any rate; for he rose up in his place, and stood with clenched fists, defiant, as the master strode towards him. The master knew the fellow was really frightened, for all his looks, and that he must have no time to rally. So he caught him suddenly by the collar, and with one great pull, had him out over his desk and on the open floor. He gave him a sharp fling backwards, and stood looking at him.

"The rough-and-tumble fighters all *clinch*, as everybody knows, and Abner Briggs was one of the kind. He sprang at the master open-handed, to clutch him. So the master had to strike—once, but very hard, and just in the place to tell. No doubt, the authority that doth hedge a school-master added to the effect of the blow; but the blow itself was a neat one, and did not require to be repeated.

"'Now go home,' said the master, 'and don't let me see you or your dog here again.' And he turned his cuffs down over the gold sleeve-buttons. This finished the great Pigwacket Centre School rebellion."

Mr. Bernard Langdon after this received an invitation to become the Master of the English branches at the "Apollinean Female Institute," a school for the education of young ladies, situated in Rockland. This he accepted, and so was introduced to Elsie Venner, who was one of the scholars. He also met here the mean and rascally superintendent, Mr. Silas Peckham, and a teacher, one Helen Darley—dear,

patient, industrious, and conscientious Helen Darley—who figures prominently in the story.

If we mention Dr. Honeywood, the fine old minister, we shall have introduced all the principal personages, and may now take up the story, which we must tell briefly.

When Elsie was growing towards womanhood, her cousin, Richard Venner, came on a second visit, with a view to seeking her fortune, and her love with it, if he could get it: although he did not care much about that. Elsie, however, becomes enamoured, in her strange fashion, with Bernard. The complication which arises on this nearly occasions a double murder, Elsie attempting secretly to poison her cousin Richard—a procedure she had attempted with one of her governesses who made herself odious to her—and Richard Venner attempting to murder Bernard. Fortunately, Elsie is unsuccessful, and her attempt even is not known to those about her. Her cousin is near being more successful. He had wild Portuguese blood in his veins and was clever at throwing the *lasso*. He therefore planned his attempt on Bernard Langdon's life thus: He would waylay him in his evening walk, lasso him, and so strangle him, and then hang him up to a tree by a rope, so as to make it appear that he had committed suicide. Old Dr. Kittredge, however, had suspected foul play, and had warned Bernard to carry a pistol. Although

hardly thinking it worth while to do so, Bernard happily took the old Doctor's advice: and, very providentially, just as Richard Venner had thrown his lasso and was about to gallop on—so that in a moment Bernard would have been strangled—he fired his pistol at the would-be murderer's horse and killed it. Even then, Richard Venner was about to finish his foul work with a knife, as Bernard was stunned; but Venner himself was entangled with his horse, and had his arm hurt, and before he could reach Bernard, was arrested in his nefarious design by Abel Stebbins, the Doctor's man, who had been sent out especially by his kind master, to protect Bernard. The scene is so good as a serio-comic picture of New England life that we must quote it:—

"Dick Venner's Southern blood was up, and as he saw Mr. Bernard move as if he were coming to his senses, he struggled violently to free himself.

"'I'll have the dog, yet,' he said, 'only let me get at him with the knife!'

"He had just succeeded in extricating his imprisoned leg, and was ready to spring to his feet, when he was caught firmly by the throat, and, looking up, saw a clumsy, barbed weapon, commonly known as a hay-fork, within an inch of his breast.

"'Hold on there! What 'n thunder 'r' y' abaout, y' darned Portagee?' said a voice, with a decided nasal tone in it, but sharp and resolute.

"Dick looked from the weapon to the person who held it, and saw a sturdy, plain man standing over him, with his teeth clinched, and his aspect that of one all ready for mischief.

"'Lay still, naow!' said Abel Stebbins, 'if y' don't, I'll stick ye. I been aäfter ye f'r a week, 'n' I got y' naow! I know'd I'd ketch at some darned trick or 'nother.'"

Dick then saw that Bernard was coming to, and therefore tried to bribe Abel to let him go before he was recognised.

"'I'll see y' darned fust! Ketch me lett'n' go!" was Abel's emphatic answer."

Bernard at last came to his senses, and found the noose of the lasso upon his neck. Abel made use of it to secure Dick Venner; but found the other end attached to the saddle.

"'Wal, naow, yeou *be* a pooty chap to hev raound! A fellah's neck in a slippernoose at one eend of a halter, 'n' a hoss on th' full spring at t'other eend!'"

Abel marched his prisoner off triumphantly to the village, but eventually, through Dr. Kittredge's good offices, Dick (for the sake of his family) was let free.

This occurrence seems to have brought Elsie's condition to a crisis. Her eyes began to lose their still, "wicked" light and cold glitter. One day she asked Mr. Bernard to walk home from the school with her. He did so. On the way she said to him—

"'I have no friend. Nothing loves me but one old woman. I cannot love anybody. They tell me there is something in my eyes that draws people to me and makes them faint. Look into them, will you?'

"She turned her face toward him. It was very pale, and the diamond eyes were glittering with a film, such as beneath other lids would have rounded into a tear.

"'Beautiful eyes, Elsie,' he said, 'sometimes very piercing, but soft now, and looking as if there were something beneath them that friendship might draw out. I am your friend, Elsie. Tell me what I can do to render your life happier.'

"'Love me!' said Elsie Venner.

"What shall a man do when a woman makes such a demand, involving such an avowal? It was the tenderest, cruellest, humblest moment of Bernard's life. He turned pale, he trembled almost, as if he had been a woman listening to her lover's declaration.

"'Elsie,' he said, presently, 'I so long to be of use to you, to have your confidence and sympathy, that I must not let you say or do anything to put us in false relations. I do love you, Elsie, as a suffering sister with sorrows of her own—as one whom I would save at the risk of my happiness and life—as one who needs a true friend more than any of all the young girls I have known. More than this you would not ask me to say. You have been through excitement

and trouble lately, and it has made you feel such a need more than ever. Give me your hand, dear Elsie, and trust me that I will be as true a friend to you as if we were children of the same mother.'."

Here let us pause and notice Dr. Holmes' wonderful conception of a true manly character. Contrast the two scenes we have quoted. Bernard's treatment of his wild scholar, Abner Briggs, and of his scarcely less troublesome pupil—though in an infinitely tender sense—Elsie Venner. In both we have the sterling nobility of a true man shown to us. It is masterly as a piece of art: it affords no slight insight into our author's personal qualities of heart that he should have been able to pourtray such a nature. How different the picture to many of those which find place in novels, and which are served up to us as models of worth. Here we have, to use the language of the immortal bard,—

> "A combination, and a form, indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man."

We would seriously advise any writer intending to set forth a manly character, to closely study Bernard Langdon, as presented to us in "Elsie Venner." Besides studying a model of the highest worth, he will also gain a very good knowledge of the grand and noble nature which distinguishes Dr. Holmes

himself. To make the picture of the latter complete, however, there are some other characters in his writings which must be studied.

To return to Elsie Venner: it was all over with her. She took to her bed, and it became the scene of her last illness. A marvellous change came over her during this illness. The light in her eyes died out; her wild, impetuous nature was calmed. She requested the attendance upon her of Helen Darley, the lady-teacher at the Institute, and her request was granted. Whilst engaged in her pious task—for it was a task, Elsie having caused Miss Darley much physical and mental agitation by her strange powers of fascination—she learned from the old nurse the secret of Elsie's erratic tendencies. "All the unaccountable looks and tastes and ways of Elsie came back to her in the light of an ante-natal impression, which had mingled an alien element in her nature. She began to look with new feelings on the contradictions in her moral nature. The fearful truth of that instinctive feeling of hers, that there was something not human looking out of Elsie's eyes, came upon her with a sudden flash of penetrating conviction. There were two warring principles in that superb organization and proud soul. One made her a woman, with all a woman's powers and longings. The other chilled all the current of out-let for her emotions. It made her tearless and mute, when

when another woman would have wept and pleaded. And it infused into her soul something—it was cruel now to call it malice—which was still, and watchful, and dangerous—which waited its opportunity, and then shot like an arrow from its bow out of the coil of brooding premeditation.

"Helen could not return to the bedside at once after this communication. It was with altered eyes that she must look on the poor girl, the victim of such an unheard-of fatality. All was explained to her now. But it opened such depths of solemn thought in her awakened consciousness, that it seemed as if the whole mystery of human life were coming up again before her for trial and judgment. '*Oh*', she thought, '*if, while the will lies sealed in its fountain, it may be poisoned at its very source, so that it shall flow dark and deadly through its whole course, who are we that we should judge our fellow-creatures by ourselves?*' Then came the terrible question, how far the elements themselves are capable of perverting the moral nature: if valor, and justice, and truth, the strength of man, and the virtue of woman, may not be poisoned out of a race by the food of the Australian in his forest—by the foul air and darkness of the Christians cooped up in the 'tenement-houses,' close by those who live in the palaces of the great cities?

"She walked out into the garden, lost in thought upon these dark and deep matters. Presently, she

heard a step behind her, and Elsie's father came up and joined her."

The reader will have gathered from the foregoing, Dr. Holmes' theory. That portion which we have printed in italics—that solemn mental question of Helen Darley's—cuts at the root of the whole matter. What is the moral of it? Simply this, that we must not attempt to judge a fellow-creature by the standard of our own views and feelings. That, apart from the accidents of inherited tendencies, there are a thousand forms in which effects are produced upon the physical nature, which affect also the moral and mental faculties. Theologians who are merely dogmatists may be alarmed at this: it plays sad havoc with their absolutions and anathemas. Timid, shrinking souls will say it is a dangerous theory to admit that crime under some circumstances, is not sin. But let thoughtful ones consider it, and they will see the truth of it, and it will make them more gentle and forbearing; more patient with those whose moral natures are warped; more mindful of the sacred injunction, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Is any confirmation of this theory and its lesson needed? If so, we may point to the example of a young Hebrew teacher, whom much people followed, Who proclaimed Himself divine. They brought before Him one day a woman taken in the commission of a most serious moral offence. The hungry mob,

stones in hand, panted eagerly to put her to the shameful death which by the strict letter of the law she merited. Stooping down the young Hebrew teacher traced something upon the ground—was it a revelation of the mis-deeds of that eager throng about Him?—He raised Himself and said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." And one by one, conscience-stricken, the mob dispersed, leaving the guilty one alone with Him. Then He spoke the gracious words of forgiveness, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

Poor Elsie continued to get more dangerously ill. The lower animal life, which had so strangely affected her nature, was dying out: and her own life was being sapped up also. She asked to see the minister, good old Dr. Honeywood, who was giving up the thunders of 'theology,' and practising the graces of Christianity. "The Rev. Doctor did come and sit by her, and spoke such soothing words to her, words of such peace and consolation, that from that hour, she was tranquil as never before. All true hearts are alike in the hour of need; the Catholic has a reserved fund of faith for his fellow-creature's trying moment, and the Calvinist reveals those springs of human brotherhood and charity in his soul which are only covered over by the iron tables inscribed with the harder dogmas of his creed. It was enough that the Reverend Doctor knew all Elsie's history. He

could not judge her by any formula, like those which have been moulded by past ages out of their ignorance. He did not talk with her as if she were an outside sinner, worse than himself. He found a bruised and languishing soul, and bound up its wounds. A blessed office—one that is confined to no sect or creed, but which good men in all times, under various names and with varying ministries to suit the need of each age, of each race, of each individual soul, have come forward to discharge for their suffering fellow-creatures. At last Elsie died, and even the golden cord—that which had covered the mark upon her fair neck, which was a sign of the disaster which had fallen upon her parent and herself—might be loosed. The animal nature had quite died out and even the mark faded away. "Old Sophy stooped over her, and, with trembling hand, loosed the golden cord. She looked intently, for some little space: there was no shade nor blemish where the ring of gold had encircled her throat. 'The Lord be praised!' the old woman cried aloud. 'He has taken away the mark that was on her; she's fit to meet His holy angels now!'"

The rest of the story we need but glance at. How Helen Darley was married to Elsie's father, and how Silas Peckham, the avaricious principal of the Institute, sought to fleece her even over her discharge of a sacred office, and was requited according to his

deserts: how Bernard was able to resume his medical studies, prospered in his profession, and married Letty Forester, Dr. Honeywood's grand-daughter. All these are treats in store for the reader of the story, the chief purpose of which we have indicated; for, notwithstanding the sad life and death of the heroine, the story is full of bright and entertaining matter. The characters are powerfully drawn; they all become personal acquaintances (mentally) to the reader; and the book, when laid down, is laid down reluctantly. The grand moral lesson as to the dependence to some extent of so-called sin upon the physical condition of the 'sinner,' in no-wise detracts from the interest of the story: indeed it rather adds to that interest. Both author and reader are satisfied. The author has not sacrificed his conscience or his principles of morality to art, and the reader has been entertained and instructed as well. How much better this is than the glossing over of vice and putting on it the cloak of virtue, which is so often seen in the plot of a novel: how much more healthy. If some of those who spin novels for us would but take a lesson from "Elsie Venner," we should get, instead of what are often vile travesties of human nature, stories helpful and comforting as well as entertaining—stories with a clear moral purpose, as well as sprightliness of narrative. Altogether we must pronounce "Elsie Venner" to be one of the best of modern novels, whether English or

American. We should like every divinity student, and every one having the cure of souls, to read it and diligently study it; especially that portion (the twenty second chapter) which contains the discussion by the Reverend Doctor and the Medical Doctor, in which is comprised an admirable view of theology as seen from a medical doctor's point of view. It would do more for the extension of true Christian sympathy and humanity, that ten years' study of some theological writings would do; although it is bound within the covers of a novel.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

In this story we have Dr. Holmes' theory of, Some "crimes" not sin, further treated of, in the view of inherited tendencies. He says in his preface, "The successive developement of inherited bodily aspects and habitudes is well known to all who have lived long enough to see families grow up under their own eyes. The same thing happens, but less obviously to common observation, in the mental and moral nature. There is something fearful in the way in which not only characteristic qualities, but particular manifestations of them, are repeated from generation to generation. Jonathan Edwards the younger tells the story of a brutal wretch in New Haven who was abusing his father, when the old man cried out, 'Don't drag me any farther, for I didn't drag *my* father beyond this tree.' I have attempted to show the successive evolution of some inherited qualities in the character of Myrtle Hazard, not so obtrusively as to disturb the

narrative, but plainly enough to be kept in sight by the small class of preface-readers."

The narrative opens with an amusing analysis of the *State Banner and Delphian Oracle*, published weekly at Oxbow Village, one of the principal centres in a thriving river-town of New England. Serious matter, however, was contained in that local journal, in the shape of an advertisement, which stated that Myrtle Hazard was missing from the Withers homestead, where she had resided with her aunt, Miss Silence Withers, and her aunt's second-cousin, Miss Cynthia Badlam.

The whole village was excited, ponds were dragged and woods scoured without avail. Miss Badlam said to nurse Byloe :

"'They needn't drag the pond. They needn't go beating the woods as if they were hunting a partridge —though for that matter Myrtle Hazard was always more like a partridge than she was like a pullet. Nothing ever took hold of that girl—not catechising, nor advising, nor punishing. It's that dreadful will of hers never was broke. I've always been afraid that she would turn out a child of wrath. Did y' ever watch her at meetin' playing with posies, and looking round all the time of the long prayer? I'm afraid :— oh I'm afraid to say what I'm afraid of. Men are so wicked, and young girls are full of deceit and so ready to listen to all sorts of artful creturs that take

advantage of their ignorance and tender years.'"

Miss Silence Withers said :

"'If I only knew that she was dead, and had died in the Lord : if I only knew that ; but if she is living in sin, or dead in wrong-doing, what is to become of me? Oh, what is to become of me when He maketh inquisition for blood?"

"Nurse Byloe was getting very red in the face. 'I hope the Lord 'll take care of Myrtle Hazard fust, if she's in trouble, 'n' wants help,' she said, ''n' *then* look out for them that comes next. Y're too suspicious. Don't believe no wrong of nobody, not till y' *must*, least of all of them that come o' the same folks, partly, and has lived with ye all their days. I tell y', Myrtle Hazard's jest as innocent of all what y've been thinkin' about, bless the poor child ; she's got a soul that's as clean and sweet—well, as a pond-lily when it opens of a mornin', without a speck on it no more than on the fust pond-lily God Almighty ever made.'"

These scraps of conversation show the direction the thoughts of Myrtle's friends were taking. We must now introduce the heroine herself to the reader ; and in order to give our author fair play, we do so by briefly mentioning her ancestry first, as he has done in the work before us. There was a martyr in the family, whose "portrait, marked 'Ann Holyoake, burned by ye bloody Papists, ano 15..' (figures

illegible), was still hanging against the panel over the fireplace in the west parlor at 'The Poplars.'" There was a notion about—which Myrtle adopted and cherished—that this martyred woman's spirit exercised a guardianship over the family. Then there was Judith, the wife of one Selah Withers, accused of sorcery, a very beautiful woman; and her son, Major Gideon Withers, a 'loud' and vain man; and some others we need not mention.

Myrtle Hazard was fifteen years old at the opening of the story, "fast growing into a large dower of hereditary beauty." Her father, Captain Charles Hazard, had married, and taken his wife with him to India, where, after Myrtle's birth, both had been taken off by the pestilence, and the child was sent back to the old Withers homestead. "The instincts and qualities belonging to the ancestral traits which predominated in the conflict of mingled lives lay in this child in embryo, waiting to come to maturity. It was as when several grafts, bearing fruit that ripens at different times, are growing upon the same stock. Her earlier impulses may have been derived directly from her father and mother, but all the ancestors who have been mentioned, and more or less obscurely many others, came uppermost in their time, before the absolute and total result of their several forces had found its equilibrium in the character by which she was to be known as an individual. These inherited

impulses were therefore many, conflicting, some of them dangerous. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil held mortgages on her life before its deed was put into her hands; but sweet and gracious influences were also born with her; and the battle of life was to be fought between them, God helping her in her need, and her own free choice siding with one or the other.

"It was not a great while before the two parties in that wearing conflict of alien lives, which is often called education, began to measure their strength against each other. The child was bright, observing, of restless activity, inquisitively curious, very hard to frighten, and with a will which seemed made for mastery, not submission.

"The stern spinster to whose care this vigorous life was committed was disposed to discharge her duty to the girl faithfully and conscientiously, but there were two points in her character and belief which had a most important bearing on the manner in which she carried out her laudable intentions. First, she was one of that class of human beings whose one single engrossing thought is their own welfare. Metaphysicians may discuss the nature of selfishness at their leisure; if to have all her thoughts centering on the one point of her own well-being by-and-bye was selfishness, then Silence Withers was supremely selfish; and if we are offended with that form of

egotism, it is no more than ten of the twelve apostles were, as the reader may see by turning to the Gospel of St. Matthew, the twentieth chapter, and the twenty-fourth verse.

"The next practical difficulty was that she attempted to carry out a theory which, whatever might be its success in other cases, did not work kindly in the case of Myrtle Hazard; but, on the contrary, developed a mighty spirit of antagonism in her nature, which threatened to end in utter lawlessness. Miss Silence started from the approved doctrine, that all children are radically and utterly wrong in all their motives, feelings, thoughts, and deeds, so long as they remain subject to their natural instincts. It was by the eradication, and not the education, of these instincts, that the character of the human being she was moulding was to be determined. The first great preliminary process, so soon as the child manifested any evidence of intelligent and persistent self-determination was *to break her will.*"

At last an opportunity arrived to apply this doctrine. Myrtle refused to eat some brown bread for her supper. Miss Silence therefore imprisoned her in a large, lone, dirty garret, the home only of spiders. "Here this little criminal was imprisoned, six, twelve —tell it not to mothers—eighteen dreadful hours, hungry until she was ready to gnaw her hands, a prey to all childish imaginations; and here, at her stern

guardian's last visit, she sat, pallid, chilled, almost fainting, but sullen and unsubdued."

The consequences of treatment such as this were to shut up the affection in the child's heart, we may well suppose; but the cruel religious teaching imposed on her was still harder to bear, and at last she rebelled against it. We must give the scene. Hymn-singing. Miss Silence, Cynthia, and Myrtle, the singers.

"The trio began—

'With holy fear and humble song,'

and got through the first verse together pretty well.

"Then came the second verse—

'Far in the deep where darkness dwells,
The land of horror and despair,
Justice has built a dismal hell,
And laid her stores of vengeance there.'

"Myrtle's voice trembled a little in singing this verse, and she hardly kept up her part with proper spirit.

"'Sing out, Myrtle,' said Miss Cynthia, and she struck up the third verse—

'Eternal plagues and heavy chains,
Tormenting racks and fiery coals,
And darts t' inflict immortal pains,
Dyed in the blood of damnèd souls.'

"This last verse was a duet, not a trio. Myrtle

closed her lips while it was singing, and when it was done threw down the book with a look of anger and disgust. The hunted soul was at bay.

"'I won't sing such words,' she said, 'and I won't stay here to hear them sung. You can't scare me into being good with your cruel hymn-book.'

"Without heeding the cries of the two women, she sprang upstairs to her hanging chamber. She threw open the window and looked down into the stream. For one moment her head swam with the sudden, overwhelming, almost maddening thought that came over her—the impulse to fling herself headlong into those running waters and dare the worst these dreadful women had threatened her with. Something—she often thought afterwards it was an invisible hand—held her back during that brief moment, and the paroxysm—just such a paroxysm as throws many a young girl into the Thames or the Seine—passed away."

In the powerful delineation of incident and character of which the foregoing is a meagre abridgement, Dr. Holmes has shown at once his art as a writer and his genius as a teacher. These stirring portraits of the origin of "evil" in innocent souls are just what are wanted. There is quite enough harm done wilfully, without any being done from mistaken zeal—least of all that mistaken zeal which is sometimes called Christian zeal, and which commits moral murder with

sanctions which disguise themselves even under the sacred name of Religion. It needs a mighty voice to arouse bigots from the terrible stupor into which they have fallen, and a strong hand to tear down the ghastly pictures they have hung up with a view to scare young souls from evil, but with the effect of driving them into it. In Dr. Holmes' writings—especially in this story—the mighty voice is heard, the strong hand is seen, and, doubtless, both have done good service. O, when will Christianity be content to deck itself with the gentle and forgiving spirit and helpful love of its divine originator, and throw aside for ever the black enormities with which it is so often overwhelmed? All honor—in truth and earnestness, we say it—all honor to this one strong voice which from Boston has raised itself to declare the gospel of truth: all honor to all kindred voices elsewhere who join in the sacred office: God speed that gospel—which is His—on its course, and let it never die until all need for its being raised shall have passed away. Let us take heed that we each—according to our ability, let it be great or small—do ever set forth truth and love, and never cloud our speech, thought, or actions with that blind bigotry which blights and starves the moral nature of those about us.

It was shortly after the scene over the hymn-singing —"blasphemy" would be the right name for it; but that we may suppose the two women were devout in

their poor way—it was shortly after that, that Myrtle disappeared. The story of her finding down the river, her narrow escape from death, her rescue by Clement Lindsay, we will leave the reader to peruse in the original: as also her near falling into the toils of the unfaithful minister, Bellamy Stoker. All these matters cannot fail to have the deepest interest for the reader who has gained the insight we have endeavored to give of Myrtle's character, and we will not anticipate that interest except by saying that as well as being highly instructive, it is also delightful to read the narrative of them.

We shall not further follow the story of Myrtle Hazard, but will say briefly that she married Clement Lindsay, who had saved her life, and had a large fortune unexpectedly prove to be hers. Her life is so full of romantic incident that except what we have quoted in order to give some idea of her nature, it is best that the reader should obtain the work and read it for himself. It is fraught with some of the noblest lessons in life. Sin and sorrow are mixed up in the story; but for the purpose of showing conquest over both. It has some of the grandest conceptions of worthiness as well as some of the most sorrowful pourtrayals of ill-doing. In order to shew our author's power we shall take up one or two of these conceptions before closing this chapter.

Foremost is the character of Byles Gridley; one of

those peaceful heroes whose biographies are written not in the blood of those slain in battle, but in the grateful tears of comforted ones; in the glad sighs of hearts bound up and healed with noble sympathy; in the thousand—though often unobtrusive—glories which arise from the exercise of charity in the purest and widest sense. "But he said sadly to himself, that his life had been a failure—that he had nothing to show for it, and his one talent was ready in its napkin to give back to his Lord." He was a grave, scholarly man, who had been a tutor; and now was "out of harness," as he called it, and, as he modestly thought, was of no use to anybody. Yet it was he who by his shrewdness and promptitude of action, recovered Myrtle when she had disappeared, and saved her from any shameful consequence to her unwise adventure. He it was who, when she was near being influenced by one who stained his "sacred cloth" by impure desire, gave her such keen sensible advice as attracted her from the fascination which might have ended in her ruin. He it was who watched her interests, and often interposed himself between her and serious harm. His bust it was, which—in the happy days that came at last—Myrtle walked up to, and kissing its marble forehead, said, "This is the face of my Guardian Angel." He had been to her, in fact, all that the popular fancy had attributed to the spirit of that martyred ancestress of hers.

Then there is Clement Lindsay, a noble young fellow, much akin to the nature of Bernard Langdon, whom we mentioned in our last chapter. We need not say much of him here, as we shall refer to him—as to his first love—in a future chapter. We have already said that he saved Myrtle's life. This he did at the imminent peril of his own, and under most peculiar circumstances—which the curious reader must discover by perusing the story for himself—and showed in that incident as well as in many others, the sterling qualities with which he was endowed.

Also, we have the character of the Rev. Eliphalet Pemberton. "I wish all ministers were as good, and simple and pure-hearted as he," said Byles Gridley on one occasion. His character is a comforting contrast to that other minister, the Rev. Bellamy Stoker, who was unfaithful to his office. It is fair here to quote from Dr. Holmes' preface. He says—

"It is lamentable to be forced to add that the Rev. Joseph Bellamy Stoker is only a softened copy of too many originals. . . There are a great many good clergymen to one bad one, but a writer finds it hard to keep to the true proportion of good and bad persons in telling a story. The three or four good ministers I have introduced must stand for many others I have known and loved, and some of whom I count to-day among my most valued friends."

We entirely concur in what he says, and we think

he has dealt fairly with "the cloth;" differing essentially in this respect from a great modern English novelist, who erred as a writer in that he travestied the ministerial character in the most gross fashion, and yet scarcely pointed a thought in the direction of the hundreds of worthy clergymen whom he at one time and another mingled with.

Before we quite finish this chapter, we must mention the character of Gifted Hopkins, the village poet. Poor fellow, he was but a rhymster, and a bad hand even in that humble capacity. Dr. Holmes says in his preface—

"Gifted Hopkins (under various aliases) has been a frequent correspondent of mine. I have also received a good many communications signed with various names, which must have been from near female relations of that young gentleman. I once sent a kind of encyclical letter to the whole family connexion; but as the delusion under which they labor is still common, and often leads to the wasting of time, the contempt of honest study or humble labor, and the misapplication of intelligence not so far below mediocrity as to be incapable of affording a respectable return when employed in the proper direction, I thought this picture from life might also be of service. When I say that no genuine young poet will apply it to himself, I think I have so far removed the sting that few or none will complain of being wounded."

Gifted Hopkins—long the pride of his village and the acknowleged poetic genius of the *Banner and Oracle*—had at last decided to publish his poems. His only uncertainty was whether he should part with the copyright for a downright sum of money, publish on shares, or take a per-centage on the sales. Byles Gridley—good old fellow—was anxious to spare him an obvious disappointment: but as he was determined did his best for him, and introduced him to the publishers of his own darling work, "Thoughts on the Universe." This is, briefly, the scene which followed, Dr. Holmes' narration of which is capital reading.

Gifted commenced his best piece, when requested by the publisher to read a specimen. A line or two will suffice to show its nature.

> "I met that gold-hair'd maiden, all too dear,
> And I to her: Lo! thou art very fair,
> Fairer than all the ladies in the world
> That fan the sweeten'd air with scented fans,
> And I am scorchèd with exceeding love,
> Yea, crispèd till my bones are dry as straw."

After hearing this and a little more, the publisher took Gifted to the den of the "Butcher;" he it was who examined the manuscripts, and Gifted was told, "The poems he drops into the basket are those rejected as of no account." Whilst he was away they managed to put Gifted's manuscript so that it should be the *third* to come to hand.

When he returned, the "Butcher" took the first manuscript and dropped that into the basket; the second was laid by for further examination.

"He took up the *third*. He glared in a dreadfully ogreish way. He opened it at random, read ten seconds, and gave a short, low grunt. He opened again, read ten seconds, and gave another grunt, this time a little longer and louder. He opened once more, read five seconds, and, with something that sounded like the snort of a dangerous animal, cast it impatiently into the basket."

The publisher was very kind to Gifted, and softened down his mortification as well as he could. The whole scene, of which we have given but the briefest summary, is splendidly delineated. Whilst one pities the deluded young author, one cannot help laughing heartily. We should strongly advise any young author intending to publish a "wreath of verse," or anything else for that matter, to read of the experiences of Gifted Hopkins first. If after that he dares to submit himself to the ordeal without fear, there is probably something in his work worth publication, or else he is one of those stubborn individuals who will not take any lesson, however obvious may be its application to him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BREAKFAST-TABLE SERIES.

"VARIOUS kinds of literary fame seem destined to various measures of duration. Some spread into exuberance with a very speedy growth, but soon wither and decay; some rise more slowly, but last long. Parnassus has its flowers of transient fragrance, as well as its oaks of towering height, and its laurels of eternal verdure." So wrote Johnson in *The Rambler*, some century and a quarter ago. The truth of his remark is seen in our own day in many cases; but the causes which contribute to the lasting fame of an author so often depend upon accident or caprice, that no certain rule may be laid down by which to judge of the probable duration of any particular author's fame. It must in all cases be matter of conjecture; although the fame of an author who has touched upon leading truths, and thrown new light upon them in an agreeable manner, may reasonably be expected to last for some considerable

length of time, especially if he shall have been quickly responded to when he gave forth his work.

With these saving remarks, we may now express our belief that Oliver Wendell Holmes will not be a flower of Parnassus "of transient fragrance;" but will attain rather to the class of "oaks of towering height" and "laurels of eternal verdure." And it is probably by the Breakfast-Table series that our anthor's laurels will sustain their verdant hue. This series of writings, which we shall in this chapter fully consider, is so replete with wisdom and wit of versatile character, that it is almost impossible for anyone to miss some point especially interesting to him or her, whilst generally it is interesting to all. Perhaps the secret of this fact lies in the following modest confession of the author, extracted from the Poet at the Breakfast-Table:

"I do not know what special gifts have been granted or denied me; but this I know, that I am like so many others of my fellow creatures, that when I smile, I feel as if they must; when I cry, I think their eyes fill: and it always seems to me that when I am most truly myself I come nearest to them and am surest of being listened to by the brothers and sisters of the larger family into which I was born so long ago. I have often feared they might be tired of me and what I tell them. But then, perhaps, would come a letter from some quiet body in some

out-of-the-way place, which showed me that I had said something which another had often felt but never said, or told the secret of another's heart in unburdening my own. Such evidences that one is in the highway of human experience and feeling lighten the footsteps wonderfully. So it is that one is encouraged to go on writing as long as the world has anything that interests him, for he, never knows how many of his fellow-beings he may please or profit, and in how many places his name will be spoken as that of a friend."

We do not care to make any invidious comparison here as to which of the Breakfast-Table books is the best. Indeed, to us, they are all best; for if, when one reads a particularly fine piece in the 'Autocrat,' one begins to think the 'Autocrat' is really the best of all, the 'Professor' and the 'Poet' at once bring their graces to the fore, and we again work round to the most satisfactory opinion that all are best. For the purposes of the review, however, a certain order must be adopted and a preference given: we therefore select the 'Autocrat' first, on account of priority of publication.

The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table is a collection into book form of a series of papers which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly. The scheme of them is simple. They are supposed to be the record of the conversation which took place at the table of

an American Boarding-house. The 'Autocrat' leads the conversation at table, and afterwards reports it, with his observations. It will at once be seen that this scheme offers a most convenient mode of introducing various subjects and submitting them to the sifting process of a spirited conversation. It enables the author to discuss matters from many points of view, and to make remarks concerning those matters (through his fellow-boarders) which as an author he could not well do, except by this device. The success of the scheme is most complete, and the reader soon becomes well acquainted with all the talking boarders, and interested exceedingly in their conversation. Since the 'Autocrat' is a 'Professor' and 'Poet,' moreover, the conversation is agreeably relieved by nice little scientific disquisitions, and some charming poems.

A clear idea of the scheme we have mentioned will be gathered from a few examples. The 'Autocrat' has led the conversation to the subject of "Conceit." He says :

"Talk about conceit as much as you like, it is to human character what salt is to the ocean ; it keeps it sweet, and renders it endurable. Say rather, it is like the natural unguent of the sea-fowl's plumage, which enables him to shed the rain that falls on him, and the wave in which he dips. When one has had *all* his conceit taken out of him, when he has lost

all his illusions, his feathers will soon soak through, and he will fly no more.

" 'So you admire conceited people, do you?' said the young lady who has come to the city to be finished off for—the duties of life.

" I am afraid you do not study logic at your school, my dear. It does not follow that I wish to be pickled in brine because I like a salt-water plunge at Nahant. I say that conceit is just as natural a thing to human minds as a centre is to a circle."

The conversation goes on about conceit for a time, and then an agreeable diversion is made to other subjects, and so on until we come to another morning's conversation, which is introduced by a pretty poetical fancy, entitled "Album Verses," followed by an amusing description of the way in which poems are sometimes written. After that we get a very general conversation with many good sayings in it; and, amongst other things, a good description of a "Man of Family."

We then get same latter-day warnings in verse, which are humorous, but with some quiet sarcasm gleaming through the humour. They are prefaced thus:

"I should have felt more nervous about the late comet if I had thought the world was ripe. But it is very green yet, if I am not mistaken; and besides there is a great deal of coal to use up, which I cannot

bring myself to think was made for nothing." We quote a few of the verses :

"When legislators keep the law,
When banks dispense with bolts and locks,
When berries, whortle,—rasp—and straw—
Grow bigger *downwards* through the box ;

"When he that selleth house or land
Shews leak in roof or flaw in right,
When haberdashers choose the stand
Whose window hath the broadest light;

"When one that hath a horse on sale
Shall bring his merit to the proof,
Without a lie for every nail
That holds the iron on the hoof;

"When Cuba's weeds have quite forgot
The power of suction to resist,
And claret-bottles harbour not
Such dimples as would hold your fist ;—

"*Till* then let Cumming blaze away
And Miller's saints blow up the globe ;
Bnt when you see that blessed day,
Then order your ascension robe !"

The second chapter (or division) of the 'Autocrat' opens well. It is a capital reproof to those who (like the young man who wrote to "The Rambler" on "the dangers and miseries of literary eminence") when

they are going to speak, watch to see whether there is not someone ready to pick their words up and sell them. For the benefit of any who may be disposed to fancy *their* thoughts too precious to be wasted in conversation, we make the following quotation:

"I really believe some people save their bright thoughts as being too precious for conversation. What do you think an admiring friend said the other day to one that was talking good things—good enough to print? 'Why,' said he, 'you are wasting merchantable literature—a cash article—at the rate, as nearly as I can tell, of fifty dollars an hour.' The talker took him to the window, and asked him to look out and tell what he saw.

"'Nothing but a very dusty street,' he said, 'and a man driving a sprinkling-machine through it.'

"'Why don't you tell the man he is wasting that water? What would be the state of the highways of life if we did not drive our *thought-sprinklers* through them, with the valves open sometimes? Besides, there is another thing about this talking, which you forget. It shapes our thoughts for us, as the surf rolls the pebbles on the shore. Let me modify the image a little. I rough-out my thoughts in talk as an artist models in clay. Spoken language is so plastic—you can pat, and coax, and spread, and shave, and rub out, and fill up, and stick on so easily, when you work that soft material, that there is nothing like it

for modelling. Out of it come the shapes which you turn into marble or bronze in your immortal books, if you happen to write such. Or, to use another illustration, writing or printing is like shooting with a rifle; you may hit your reader's mind or miss it. But talking is like playing at a mark with the pipe of an engine; if it is within reach, and you have time enough, you can't help hitting it."

This we think is a good piece of practical common-sense writing, which bears upon it the impress still of profound observation, and which is decked also with the genial grace of one who is not mercenary in his literary views. The only regret one has is that one cannot have the 'Autocrat' at one's own table, to discourse with us upon such interesting topics as may from time to time arise.

See, further, with what good grace our author touches upon the study of divinity, and shows not only that laymen have a right to an opinion upon the matter, but may possibly be the better theologian than the professed divinity-teacher. He says in the 'Autocrat:'

"Most decent people hear one hundred lectures or sermons—discourses—on theology every year; and this, twenty, thirty, fifty years together. They read a great many religious books besides. The clergy, however, rarely hear any sermons except what they preach themselves. A dull preacher might be

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conceived, therefore, to lapse into a state of *quasi*-heathenism, simply for want of religious instruction. And, on the other hand, an attentive and intelligent hearer, listening to a succession of wise teachers, might become actually better educated in theology than any one of them. We are all theological students, and more of us qualified as doctors of divinity than have received degrees at of the Universities.

"It is not strange, therefore, that very good people should often find it difficult, if not impossible, to keep their attention fixed upon a sermon, treating feebly a subject which they have thought vigorously about for years, and heard able men discuss scores of times. If you ever saw a crow with a king-bird after him, you will get an image of a dull speaker and a lively listener. The bird in sable plumage flaps heavily along his straightforward course, while the other sails round him, over him, under him, leaves him, comes back again, tweaks out a black feather, shoots away once more, never losing sight of him, and finally reaches the crow's perch at the same time as the crow does, having cut a perfect labyrinth of loops and knots and spirals, while the slow fowl was painfully working from one end of his straight line to the other."

In this again we have an example of mild sarcasm toned down into quiet humor; and at the same time a proof of our author's tenderness. He does not denounce venomously the mediocrity or worse than

mediocrity of intellect, sometimes betrayed by preachers. He is content to assert the general right and ability of laymen to have their opinions of divinity, and expends whatever of sarcasm may be mixed with his thought, by adopting a happy figure, and quietly laughing at the "sable bird" plodding through his appointed theological course. This is characteristic of him, and noteworthy. Everyone knows that smart remarks often—more often than not—depend upon that which is painful to someone or another. Many witty sayings would have to be left unsaid if those only were spoken which could be spoken without any ill-nature. Dr. Holmes sets a good example in this respect; and if his sarcasm is less scathing because most free from malice, he more than compensates himself by happiness of expression or well-chosen figure. We are thus indulged to our laugh; but it is a good-natured laugh. And if we are checked (as we often are) in our laughing at something which is ludicrous enough, but yet pitiable, we need not complain, but rather praise our author for his literary self-denial. If some other authors would take his example in this respect, we should be able to point with some pride to our advance upon the literary worthies of the last century, who—Johnson amongst them, with all his pity—would "lash" their best friend, rather than let an opportunity of saying a smart thing go by them.

Take the following as another specimen of con-

versation. The "Autocrat" remarked—

"Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all."

"I think sir—said the divinity student—you must intend that for one of the sayings of the Seven Wise Men of Boston you were speaking of the other day."

"I thank you, my young friend—was my reply—but I must say something better than that before I could pretend to fill out the number.

"The schoolmistress wanted to know how many of these sayings there were on record, and what, and by whom said.

"Why, let us see—there is that one of Benjamin Franklin. To be sure he said a great many wise things—and I don't feel sure he didn't borrow this—he speaks as if it were old. But then he applied it so neatly:

"'He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another than he whom you yourself have obliged.'

"Then there is that glorious Epicurean paradox, uttered by my friend the Historian, in one of his flashing moments:

"'Give us the luxuries of life, and we will dispense with its necessaries.'

"To these must certainly be added that other saying of one of the wittiest of men:

"'Good Americans, when they die, go to Paris.'

"The divinity-student looked grave at this, but said nothing.

"The schoolmistress spoke out, and said she didn't think the wit meant any irreverence. It was only another way of saying, Paris is a heavenly place after New York or Boston.

"A jaunty-looking person, who had come in with the young fellow they call John—evidently a stranger —said there was one more wise man's saying that he had heard: it was about our place, but he didn't know who said it. A civil curiosity was manifested by the company to hear the fourth wise saying. I heard him distinctly whispering to the young fellow who brought him to dinner, *Shall I tell it?* to which the answer was, *Go a-head!* Well—he said—this is what I heard:

"'Boston State-House is the hub of the solar system. You couldn't pry that out of a Boston man, if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar.'

"Sir—said I—I am gratified with your remark. It expresses with pleasing vivacity that which I have sometimes heard uttered with malignant dulness. The satire of the remark is essentially true of Boston, and of all other considerable and inconsiderable places with which I have had the privilege of being acquainted. I have been about lecturing, you know, and have found the following propositions to hold true:

"1. The axis of the earth sticks out visibly through the centre of each and every town or city.

"2. If more than fifty years have passed since its foundation, it is affectionately styled by the inhabitants the '*good old* town of ——' (whatever its name may happen to be).

"3. Every collection of its inhabitants that comes together to listen to a stranger, is invariably declared to be a 'remarkably intelligent audience.'

"4. The climate of the place is particularly favorable to longevity.

"5. It contains several persons of vast talent little known to the world."

This is pretty well for an American, we think. Perhaps some of us modest English people might take a lesson from those propositions. Really, after having had those general truths propounded by a leading—perhaps *the* leading—American writer, we must be careful how we continue to apply "brag" to our cousins over the water. The explanation of it all of course is that any reasonable man who has travelled cannot but have recognised that there are peculiar beauties as well as peculiar deformities attaching to every place, and that to its own people—but to them alone—each place is the best place. Whilst loving his native land and thinking it best in the sense of its being "home" (as you may see if you care to turn back and re-peruse those lines of his with which

we closed our second chapter), Dr. Holmes is still a true citizen of the world, and a brother in the universal human family. And when one considers for a moment what a small particle of the universe our whole globe is, one recognises that this is after all the proper position for a man to take: for when immensity is considered, and our world is looked at from the outside, it must make the angels smile to see us engaged in the unprofitable task of splitting ourselves up into parties and sections of parties, and sometimes even into solitary individual existences.

This is rather a digression from our criticism; but we must be pardoned if now and then we follow up a suggestion offered by what we are reviewing. To return to our self-appointed task, then, we may say that the conversations of which we have quoted scraps are in our opinion not only interesting and vivacious; not only replete with wisdom and wit; but also have a genial and familiar flavor with them such as invites you to take your (mental) part in them and make yourself quite at home at the boarding-house table.

Let us indulge in one other example from the "Autocrat," which will perhaps set us thinking and help to give us a good opinion of ourselves, whilst at the same time it does not give us reason to undervalue the great intellectual heroes whose fossilised thoughts we have in the books we most prize. After an

exceedingly beautiful introduction upon the subject of *the feelings*, the "Autocrat" says:

"I like books—I was born and bred among them, and have the easy feeling when I get into their presence, that a stable-boy has amongst horses. I don't think I undervalue them either as companions or as instructors. But I can't help remembering that the world's great men have not commonly been great scholars, nor its great scholars great men. The Hebrew patriarchs had small libraries, I think, if any; yet they represent to our imaginations a very complete idea of manhood, and, I think, if we could ask in Abraham to dine with us men of letters next Saturday, we should feel honored by his company.

"What I wanted to say about books is this: that there are times in which every active mind feels itself above any and all human books.

"I think a man must have a good opinion of himself sir,—said the divinity-student—who should feel himself above Shakespeare at any time—

"My young friend, I replied, the man who is never conscious of a state of feeling or of intellectual effort entirely beyond expression by any form of words whatsoever is a mere creature of language. I can hardly believe that there are any such men."

In the remarks just quoted we have a very Carlyle-like stroke, in our opinion. Many persons have thought the same thing, doubtless; but few have had

the courage to give expression to the thought. Of course, the blind devotees to great names, who look upon Shakespeare as something superhuman, will be enraged at the suggestion conveyed in the bold statement of the "Autocrat," and will probably join in a whine we somewhere remember reading as to shop-boys presuming to criticise Shakespeare. But those who look at the matter fairly will see two points arising out of all this :—

1. That Shakespeare was very human, or he would never have taken hold of our affections as he has done.

2. That if ordinary mortals can conceive thoughts above expression in words, a Shakespeare can conceive like thoughts relatively as much more sublime than they, as his uttered thoughts are greater than theirs.

This will doubtless appease any whose sensibilities may have been fluttered with the fear that our author meant to set himself above Shakespeare, or that we meant to encourage him in so doing.

We may here perhaps be allowed to digress for a moment to say a word or two upon the *humanity* of great writers. A gentleman said to me in the course of a discussion as to the sale of a book: "If the angel Gabriel wrote the book it would not sell as you think it would." I might have replied (but did not, because —of course—it did not occur to me at the right

moment) that if the archangel Gabriel [he meant the *arch*angel no doubt] wrote the book it probably would not sell at all. What does any angel know about us and our needs? He may be either a divine or satanic messenger to lead us to good or tempt us to evil; but he does not know very much about the heart's longings and the soul's yearnings which cry for food, and which only our intellectual great-hearts can satisfy. A writer's *humanity* endears him to the reader. It matters little whether he tells us something absolutely new, so long as he tells us something which is sympathetic—something which suits our case. If we have a doubt, which we fear to make known, lest our fellows laugh at us; if we have an idea, and are afraid to express it, lest we be deemed presumptuous—and then find that some acknowledged genius has confessed his doubt (exactly like ours) or ventilated his idea (corresponding to our own) we take courage and feel happier that we doubt or fear in good company. And so with our other emotions.

We will not keep the "Autocrat" waiting longer, particularly as we are about to dismiss him presently in favor of his friend the "Professor." We must just mention the conversation upon trees, however, which is to be found in the tenth division of the volume, and which is most interesting: as indeed it should be, since our author calls them his "tree-wives." There are some other matters in the "Autocrat" to which

we shall refer (one of which you will find as a "lesson in love" in a later chapter) but we must leave much for the interested reader to discover for himself by perusing the volume—the first of the Breakfast-Table series—which we have in our imperfect fashion reviewed.

The Professor at the Breakfast-Table is similar in its conception and scheme to the "Autocrat,' except that it is modified by the fact that the writer is no longer autocrat *of*, but professor *at*, the table. The full title is, "The Professor at the Breakfast-Table; what he said, what he heard, and what he saw:" and interwoven with this is "The Story of Iris." We have in this history some of the old boarders, it being the same boarding-house as was honored by the "Autocrat." The divinity-student and the young man John, and some others whom we have not yet introduced to the reader, are among them. We are favored also with some new acquaintances; one of the most remarkable being a little deformed gentleman, who is very eccentric upon many points, but whose strong predilection in favor of Boston amuses and interests us. The following is one of his opening speeches:

"Full of crooked little streets; but I tell you Boston has opened, and kept open, more turnpikes that lead straight to free thought and free speech and free deeds than any other city of live men or dead

men—I don't care how broad their streets are, nor how high their steeples."

Altogether this little gentleman is a most interesting study. A poor, little, mis-shapen body, a member, too, of that religion which is supposed to enslave its votaries; yet with some burning thoughts which flash out of him now and then, and which the "Professor" has kindly recorded for us. We shall have something more to say about him presently.

In the meantime, let us notice what Dr. Holmes has to say upon those troublesome matters, Homœopathy and Spiritualism. He thinks these are nemeses upon the medical and clerical professions for being too exclusive; or (if we may use plain and expressive language) for indulging in humbug. Probably he is correct. We think he is; but the reader who has been cured by homœopathy, and has had interviews with the spirits, may perhaps complain at the tone of his remarks. He says:

"When a civilization or a civilized custom falls into senile *dementia*, there is commonly a judgment ripe for it, and it comes as plagues come, from a breath—as fires come, from a spark.

"Here, look at medicine. Big wigs, gold-headed canes, Latin prescriptions, shops full of abominations, recipes a yard long, 'curing' patients by drugging as sailors bring a wind by whistling, selling lies at a guinea apiece—a routine in short, of giving unfor-

tunate sick people a mess of things either too odious to swallow or too acrid to hold, or, if that were possible, both at once.

"Now mark how the great plague came on the generation of drugging doctors, and in what form it fell.

"A scheming drug-vendor (inventive genius), an utterly untrustworthy and incompetent observer, (profound searcher of nature), a shallow dabbler in erudition (sagacious scholar), started the monstrous fiction (founded the immortal system) of Homœopathy. I am very fair, you see—you can help yourself to either of these sets of phrases.

"All the reason in the world would not have had so rapid and general an effect on the public mind to disabuse it of the idea that a drug is a good thing in itself, instead of being, as it is, a bad thing, as was produced by the trick (system) of this German charlatan (theorist.)

"You don't know what plague has fallen on the practitioners of theology? I will tell you, then. It is *spiritualism.* While some are crying out against it as a delusion of the devil, and some are laughing at it as an hysteric folly, and some are getting angry with it as a mere trick of interested or mischievous persons, spiritualism is quietly undermining the traditional ideas of the future state which have been and are still accepted,—not merely in those who believe in it, but

in the general sentiment of the community, to a larger extent than most good people seem to be aware of. It needn't be true to do this, any more than Homœopathy need, to do its work."

We must bear in mind that the foregoing was written in America ; or it might appear that the case were put too strongly. But it is true, even here in sober England, to a larger extent than many persons think. Homœopathy we will leave the doctors to talk about. As to Spiritualism, it is to be hoped that we shall be patient enough to wait for the *natural* explanation of it. There are, doubtless, forces working in our midst, for which our scientists have not even a name yet : but which when discovered, will account satisfactorily for many things which may seem supernatural now. In the meantime we may be satisfied with the conclusion that as a scientific fact a spirit—that which is immaterial—cannot be seen : and that as a matter of faith, it is improbable that those who have finished their apprenticeship to this world, and are now learning the higher mysteries, are allowed to come back at the medium's will to play with the silly toys of earth again. We hope that some of those who have allowed their wonder to run away with their judgment in the direction of spiritualism will see this, and think about it, and consider whether they had not better leave the mediums to an uninterrupted intercourse with the spirits. If the curious would do this, instead of temp-

ting sharpers to get up astonishing spiritualistic scenes by feeing them so liberally as they do, it is possible that spiritualism would die a natural death.

We will change the subject now (if the reader pleases) and hear a little more of what the 'Professor' has to say. Perhaps you will like this :

"My friend who calls himself *The Autocrat* has given me a caution which I am going to repeat, with my comment upon it, for the benefit of all concerned.

"Professor,—said he, one day,—don't you think your brain will run dry before a year's out, if you don't get the pump to help the cow? Let me tell you what happened to me once. I put a little money into a bank, and bought a check-book, so that I might draw it as I wanted, in sums to suit. Things went on nicely for a time ; scratching with a pen was as easy as rubbing Aladdin's Lamp, and my blank check-book seemed to be a dictionary of possibilities, in which I could find all the synonymes of happiness, and realize anyone of them on the spot. A check came back to me at last with these two words upon it,—*no funds.* My check-book was a volume of waste-paper.

"Now, Professor,—said he—I have drawn something out of your bank, you know ; and just so sure as you keep drawing out your soul's currency without making new deposits, the next thing will be, *No funds,*—and then where will you be, my boy? These little bits of paper mean your gold and your silver

and your copper, Professor; and you will certainly break up and go to pieces, if you don't hold on to your metallic basis.

"There is something in that—said I. Only I rather think life can coin thought somewhat faster than I can count it off in words. What if one should go round and dry up with soft napkins all the dew that falls of a June evening on the leaves of his garden? Shall there be no more dew on those leaves thereafter? Marry, yea—many drops, large and round and full of moonlight as those thou shalt have absterged!"

Then follows one of those nice little disquisitions we spoke of, not too learned, spiced with anecdote, yet sufficiently instructive. And when one has read it, any fear which one might have had—don't assume we *had* any such fear—that one's thought would one day be all written out, leaving the well dry, is quelled. Perhaps one might lay it down as a working axiom that those who have the ability to think need never be afraid that their thinking faculties will ever cease for want of fuel. Like a well of water which is so deep that no bucket-rope is long enough to reach the bottom of it, there must always remain in a thoughtful mind more than can ever be drawn out of its depths.

But it is time that we mentioned Iris. She was the child of a poor Latin tutor, who had married late in life. Her mother died whilst she was still an infant.

The old tutor's efforts at finding his child a name are worth mentioning. *Lucretia*—she killed herself. *Virginia*—her father stabbed her to save her from a worse state. These would not do. *Dido*—He began reading the loves and mishaps of Dido. It wouldn't do. A lady who had not learned discretion by experience and come to an evil end. He read of *Iris*. "He jumped up with a great exclamation, which the particular recording angel who heard it pretended not to understand, or it might have gone hard with the Latin tutor some time or other.

"'*Iris* shall be her name!' he said. So her name was Iris!"

At last the old tutor did, whilst his little "rainbow" was still a child: and she was brought to the boarding-house in the charge of a lady who was known as the Model of all the Virtues. This lady was so oppressively correct in all she said or did that she became unwomanized. The "little gentleman" hated her. He said, "I hate her because her voice sounds as if it never trembled, and her eyes look as if she never knew what it was to cry."

This lady-boarder gives the "Professor" the opportunity of saying some good things about women, of which the example which follows will perhaps interest the reader. He says—

"As the Model of all the Virtues is about to leave us, I find myself wondering what is the reason we are

not all very sorry. Surely we all like good persons. She is a good person. Therefore we like her. Only we don't.

"This brief syllogism, and its briefer negative, involving the principle which some English conveyancer borrowed from a French wit and embodied in the lines by which Dr. Fell is made unamiably immortal—this syllogism, I say, is one that most persons have had occasion to construct and demolish, respecting somebody or other, as I have done for the Model. 'Pious and painefull.' Why has that excellent old phrase gone out of use? Simply because those good *painefull* or painstaking persons proved to be such nuisances in the long run, that the word 'painefull' came, before people thought of it, to mean *paingiving* instead of *painstaking*.

"So, the old fellah's off to-morrah—said the young man John.

"Old fellow?—said I—whom do you mean?

"Why, the one that came with our little beauty—the old fellah in petticoats.

"Now that means something—said I to myself.—These rough young rascals very often hit the nail on the head, if they do strike with their eyes shut. A real woman does a great many things without knowing why she does them; but these pattern machines mix up their intellects with everything they do, just like men. They can't help it, no doubt; but we can't

help getting sick of them either. Intellect is to a woman's nature what her watch-spring skirt is to her dress; it ought to underlie her silks and embroideries, but not to show itself too staringly on the outside. You don't know, perhaps, but I will tell you—the brain is the palest of all the internal organs, and the heart the reddest. Whatever comes from the brain carries the hue of the place it came from, and whatever comes from the heart carries the heat and color of its birthplace."

We will leave the reader to discover for himself what more our author has to say about the Model of all the Virtues. The few sentences we have just quoted will, however, bear thinking over, and will doubtless prove suggestive of many ideas upon a subject which is very unsettled. One cannot quite make up one's mind that these unswerving and rigidly moral persons are not entitled to admiration—that, in short, they have no business with us poor sinners, whom they quietly twit with their *wholc-ly* living;—but it is hard to give them ungrudging praise for, or to fully appreciate, their cold passionless virtue.

Let us return to Iris. She kept a little book, a repository of little scraps of verse and of sketches (for she was both artist and poet). In this book—which the 'Professor,' by special favor, was allowed to peep into—were some lines, from which we quote the following:

"She knew not love, yet lived in maiden fancies,—
Walked simply clad, a queen of high romances,
And talked strange tongues with angels in her trances.

"Twin-souled she seemed, a two-fold nature wearing,—
Sometimes a flashing falcon in her daring,
Then a poor mateless dove that droops despairing.

"If she had—well! she longed, and knew not wherefore;
Had the world nothing she might live to care for?
No second self to say her evening prayer for?

"She knew the marble shapes that set men dreaming,
Yet with her shoulders bare and tresses streaming
Showed not unlovely to her simple seeming.

"Vain? Let it be so! Nature was her teacher.
What if a lonely and unsistered creature
Loved her own harmless gift of pleasing feature?

"In the strange crossing of uncertain chances,
Somewhere, beneath some maiden's tear-dimmed glances
May fall her little book of dreams and fancies.

"Sweet sister! Iris, who shall never name thee,
Trembling for fear her open heart may shame thee,
Speaks from this vision-haunted page to claim thee.

"Spare her, I pray thee! If the maid is sleeping,
Peace with her! she has had her hour of weeping.
No more! she leaves her memory in thy keeping!"

Dear, innocent, little Iris! Of course when we read those lines which the "Professor" speaks through you,—when we read those hintings of your yearning for love,—we know that a love story is coming for you. But you have some other experiences to go through yet. You have a more sacred duty before you even than to *love*.

The fact is that soon after the "Professor" gives us those lines from Iris' book, he tell us that the little gentleman, the poor little deformed creature who had so much spirit in him, was becoming dangerously ill.

The "Professor" went to visit the little gentleman professionally, the poor little fellow said to him, "I have come to the hill difficulty, sir, and am fighting my way up." He continued ill and it was evident he was coming to his last days. One day the following scene took place between him and the "Professor:"

"They said the doctors would want my skeleton when I was dead.—You are my friend, if you are a doctor,—a'n't you?

"I just gave him my hand. I had not the heart to speak.

"I want to lie still,—he said,—after I am put to bed upon the hill yonder. Can't you have a great stone laid over me, as they did over the first settlers in the old burying-ground at Dorchester, so as to keep the wolves from digging them up? I never slept easy over the sod;—I should like to be quiet under it.

And besides,—he said, in a kind of scared whisper,—I don't want to have my bones stared at, as my body has been. I don't doubt I was a *remarkable case*; but for God's sake, oh, for God's sake, don't let 'em make a show of the cage I have been shut up in and looked through the bars of for so many years."

Then we get a piece of true professional sympathy which the reader will doubtless like. We need not tell the story of the little gentleman's death, but his wish was respected. In the Copp's Hill burying-ground "you will find a fair mound, of dimensions fit to hold a well-grown man. I will not tell you the inscription upon the stone which stands at its head; for I do not wish you to be *sure* of the resting place of one who could not bear to think that he should be known as a cripple among the dead, after being pointed at so long among the living. The Little Gentleman lies where he longed to be, among the old names and the old bones of the Boston people."

Throughout his illness Iris had nursed him: affectionately as a daughter could do, she had tended him. The whole story is so affecting, and withal so full of sweet suggestions and wise thoughts, yet so intermingled with that which amuses whilst it instructs, that many readers will find it one of the best literary treats they have had, to read the story of the Professor at the Breakfast-Table.

It will not be inappropriate to remark particularly

here how finely Dr. Holmes has brought out one of the most angelic sides of the womanly nature in his recital of what happened during the Little Gentleman's illness,—namely the ministering qualities of woman in the sick-chamber. We realize the quiet hush and stillness of the darkened room in which the sick man lay. We see the gentle figure of the woman moving softly to and fro,—now shading a too glaring light, now applying some ease-giving remedy. And as the sight is presented vividly and yet more vividly to our mental vision by the masterly description of it we read, a more holy feeling steals over us, and we worship the beneficence and grace which is exemplified before us. We get some faint idea of what the boundless love of the Eternal Whole is, when we think how much can be shown even by one infinitesimal part. It becomes easier to us to believe in an Omnipresent Providence when we see a ministering woman provided for the last necessities of the lone and afflicted Little Gentleman. The hard crusting of our nature, which prevalence of selfishness in the outer world forms, is broken through by the beautiful touch of self-abnegation which is here shown, and our faith in humanity is elevated and refined by the spectacle. You don't believe in a spiritual life; you don't believe in angels, sceptic! Go into a sick-chamber, and observe soft and tender hands soothing the hot and tortured brow of a fevered patient; hear sweet and

gentle words of prayer to God and encouragement to the sufferer falling almost inaudibly from a woman's lips and distilling the very odour of heaven around—then, if you can, retain your scepticism. As we gaze upon the figure of Iris sitting out the long hours in the darkened and gloomy chamber of a stranger, doing it all with complete unselfishness, looking only to pleasing her God, we *cannot* be sceptical.

The love-story of Iris you will hear of later. We will just mention the young man John again, and so close our review of the "Professor." He and the Professor were talking together.

"It's no use—he answered—I look at them girls and feel as the fellah did when he missed catchin' the trout. 'To'od 'a' cost more butter to cook 'n he's worth, says the fellah. Takes a whole piece o' goods to cover a girl up now-a-days. I'd as lief undertake to keep a span of elephants—and take an ostrich to board too—as to marry one of 'em. What's the use? Clerks and counterjumpers a'n't anything. Sparragrass and green peas a'n't for them, not while they're young and tender. Hossback-ridin' a'n't for them, except once a year, on Fast-day. And marryin' a'n't for them. Sometimes a fellah feels lonely, and would like to have a nice young woman, to tell her how lonely he feels. And sometimes a fellah—here the young man John looked very confidential, and, perhaps, as if a little ashamed of his weakness—sometimes

a fellah would like to have one o' them small young ones to trot on his knee and push about in a little wagon—a kind of a little Johnny, you know. It's odd enough, but it seems to me nobody can afford them little articles, except the folks that are so rich they can buy everything, and the folks that are so poor they don't want anything It makes nice boys of us young fellahs, no doubt! And it's pleasant to see fine young girls sittin', like shopkeepers behind their goods, waitin', and waitin', and waitin', 'n' no customers—and the men lingerin' round and lookin' at the goods, like folks that want to be customers, but havn't got the money!"

Poor young man John! How many representatives he has all over the civilized world! Society—we use the word in its broad sense—has so edged round some of its unfortunate members as to make it hard work for them to be true to their higher instincts. What with conventionalities on the one hand, and needy circumstances on the other, its youthful members are put to the greatest extremity in abstaining from what is shocking to morality. We must be content to echo the hint which our author has given, and for prudential as well as conventional motives, be satisfied with just rustling the veil instead of drawing it aside. The hint will be sufficient for thoughtful readers. Fortunately for the young man John, he had not to linger so long as he feared; for,

some time afterward, the "Professor" was "attracted by the cheerful spectacle of a well-dressed and somewhat youthful papa wheeling a very elegant little carriage containing a stout baby." It was our young friend with his little Johnny.

Reluctantly we close the pages of the "Professor," knowing that we have given but the faintest gleam of the richness of its contents. The professor was—*is*, we may say—a profound observer of nature, and of humanity. The nature of his profession has, of course, trained him to strict observation and analysis of the results of observation. This training and its experiences he has made use of for our benefit, and in his record of what he said, heard, and saw "at the breakfast-table," we have much fruit of observation. But besides this, as we have already observed, he is a poet—a maker—himself an original thinker. We therefore get many new, glowing, thoughts from him, which it will well repay the reader to gather for himself. One sweet poem in the "Professor," we must mention, and quote from it a few lines. It is entitled "A Mother's Secret." The following will hint its subject, and show its character:

"At last, by forms of earthly semblance led,
They gained the crowded inn, the oxen's shed.
No pomp was there, no glory shone around
On the coarse straw that strewed the reeking ground;

One dim retreat a flickering torch betrayed,—
In that poor cell the Lord of Life was laid!

"The wondering shepherds told their breathless tale
Of the bright choir that woke the sleeping vale;
Told how the skies with sudden glory flamed;
Told how the shining multitude proclaimed
'Joy, joy to earth! Behold the hallowed morn!
In David's city Christ the Lord is born!'
'Glory to God!' let angels shout on high—
'Good-will to men!' the listening Earth reply!

"They spoke with hurried words and accents wild;
Calm in his cradle slept the heavenly child.
No trembling word the mother's joy revealed—
One sigh of rapture, and her lips were sealed;
Unmoved she saw the rustic train depart,
But kept their words to ponder in her heart.

* * * * *

"Youth fades; love droops; the leaves of friendship fall;
A mother's secret hope outlives them all."

The whole poem will, we think, be read with great pleasure, since it tells one of our most prized stories in a sweet and touchingly simple mode. Our author could, no doubt, the better write that poem because of his own happy experiences: the key to which may perhaps be found in his dedication to his "Songs in Many Keys." It is as follows: "To the most indulgent of readers, the kindest of critics, my beloved

mother, all that is least unworthy of her in this volume is dedicated by her affectionate son."

The Poet at the Breakfast-Table. What is that like? If some of you look at the last paragraph but one of its closing division, you will find these words: "The second comer is commonly less welcome than the first, and the third makes but a rash venture." Our author is modest: too modest sometimes, perhaps, for a man who has written out some good thoughts, and knows it. Still we love over-modesty rather than absence of modesty, and will therefore be content. The fact is, however, that if we had not already said that all—"Autocrat," "Professor," and "Poet"—are best, we should be inclined to say this last child of the breakfast-table family is the best of all. It will not prove so entertaining as its fellows to those who love exciting stories, and care little for graver matters. But to those who have been exercising their own minds upon deep truths—"deep" only because it has been the fashion to bury them out of sight—this record of the real or fancied conversation of some thoughtful spirits will be eminently interesting. The "Poet," the "Master of Arts," and the "Young Astronomer" are the three chief persons in this record, and it is to them we shall chiefly direct our attention. With plenty of light, and sometimes amusing, matter to relieve it from heaviness, the principal topics discussed in the "Poet"

are Theology and Humanity. Some of those questions which shrinking souls are afraid of discussing are here submitted to searching enquiry. Thus the young astronomer, whose verses, entitled "Wind-Clouds and Star-Drifts," form a considerable portion of the volume, broaches such matters as the following :

"I dare not be a coward with my lips
Who dare to question all things in my soul
My life shall be a challenge, not a truce !
This is my homage to the mightier powers,
To ask my boldest question, undismayed
By muttered threat that some hysteric sense
Of wrong or insult will convulse the throne
Where wisdom reigns supreme ; and if I err,
They all must err who have to feel their way
As bats that fly at noon ; for what are we
But creatures of the night, dragged forth by day,
Who needs must stumble, and with stammering steps
Spell out their paths in syllables of pain ?"

And again—

"I claim the right of knowing whom I serve,
Else is my service idle ; He that asks
My homage asks it from a reasoning soul."

Also the following, which needs careful reading—

"Alas ! how much that seemed immortal truth,
That heroes fought for, martyrs died to save,

Reveals its earth-born lineage,
And limping in its march, its wings unplumed,
Its heavenly semblance faded like a dream!"

The tendency of most of the young astronomer's verses, and of the conversations which ensued between him and the 'Poet' and the 'Master of Arts,' or some of them, is towards stripping away some of the bandages and swaddling clothes with which 'creed' and 'anathema' have environed religious thought. The following quotation by the 'Poet,' for example, is largely supported :—

"The *non-clerical* mind is disposed in all ages to look favorably upon the doctrine of the universal restoration to holiness and happiness of all fallen intelligences, whether human or angelic."

The right of humanity to fullest scientific research into what are deemed sacred things, is also upheld. Some good people will, of course, be alarmed at this; but if they will study the "Poet" attentively they will find that he reconciles Science and Religion very happily, as indeed all true thinkers—those who "think" with their whole natures and not with part—must do. In Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* you have the process philosophically wrought out. You get the "Everlasting No," the "Centre of Indifference," and at last the "EVERLASTING YEA." These are the signs of a great upheaving of the intellect against the false outside clothing of Religion, and the finding at last of the

Truth. In the "Poet" we have something of the same sort, but less vehement. All those who are on doubtful ground in these matters will do well to read the experiences of the English writer and the American writer; both will be instructive. And then, perhaps, if not before then, they may find it useful to turn to what we love to call the sacred volume, and read the story of that grand character, Job. Those who believe *only* in Science, and so mistake, and those who shrink from Science, and commit as great error, will both learn something worth knowing. Job, three thousand years ago—or, if you will, someone since then, in his name—said, "One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet. His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow. And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure. They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them." Can Science alone account for this? Let him who is scientist alone also read the thirty-eighth to the forty-first chapters of that same story of Job. On the other hand, those who fear enquiry should remember that when one of Job's false comforters said to him, "Can man by searching find out God?" Job answered him in return showing him that man might by searching find out God. Science and Religion must go together. *The brain may reason as it will; but the heart will love, and the soul will yearn after, the Creative and*

the Infinite. Those who use brain only, or passion or emotion only, are alike incomplete in their action; as well go upon one leg, and hop along, when you have two, and can walk, as to use reason or emotion alone, when you have both. The "Poet" will have done good service if he shall have either incited some passionless scientist to open his heart and love, and his soul and adore; or some loving and adoring, but unreasonable, worshipper, to think also. It is to this end that his work tends; and if it has the result aimed at, it will spread true knowledge, and increase charity and goodwill among men, and bring glory to God.

We will make two quotations bearing upon the matters we have just referred to, and then go on to notice some other things the "Poet" has given us. In one place—as part of a letter supposed to be written to him by a lady-boarder—he says:

"I am jealous, yes, I own I am jealous of any word, spoken or written, that would tend to impair that birthright of reverence which becomes for so many in after years the basis of a deeper religious sentiment. And yet, as I have said, I cannot and will not shut my eyes to the problems which may seriously affect our *modes* of conceiving the eternal truths on which, and by which, our souls must live. . . . . I know that there are many articles of belief clinging to the skirts of our time which are the bequests of the ages of ignorance that God winked at.

But for all that I would train a child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, according to the simplest and best creed I could disentangle from those barbarisms, and I would in every way try to keep up in young persons that standard of reverence for all sacred subjects, which may, without any violent transition, grow and ripen into the devotion of later years."

The other quotation, which follows, is supposed to be read by the Master of Arts from his work on the "Order of Things:"—

"If men would only open their eyes to the fact which stares them in the face from history, and is made clear enough by the slightest glance at the condition of mankind, that humanity is of immeasurably greater importance than their own or any other particular belief, they would no more attempt to make private property of the grace of God than to fence in the sunshine for their own especial use and enjoyment."

We shall deal with the relations of Religion and Science in a future chapter, and therefore need not pursue them further here.

Turning to another matter, let us quote further from the young astronomer's verses:

"Minds roll in paths like planets; they revolve
This in a larger, that a narrower ring,
But round they come at last to that same phase,
That self-same light and shade they showed before."

Dr. Holmes has dealt with this matter in a very interesting manner in his excellent little treatise on Mechanism in Thought and Morals. The subject is well worth studying, and some curious results come from the study; or, rather, are found by it: the familiar illustration being that of a man accustomed regularly to go a certain journey, and who at last comes to take the right way without observing it, his will or thought acting mechanically. In the same way many moral doings are the result of habit, or a sort of moral mechanism.

The young astronomer is both penetrative in his thought, and instructive in the teaching deduced from his thought, as you will agree on reading and closely observing the meaning of the following:

"There are two veils of language, hid beneath
Whose sheltering folds, we dare to be ourselves,
And not that other self which nods and smiles
And babbles in our name; the one is Prayer,
Lending its licensed freedom to the tongue
That tells our sorrows and our sins to Heaven;
The other, Verse, that throws its spangled web
Around our naked speech and makes it bold."

We must, however, bring this chapter, which is becoming lengthy, to its conclusion, first mentioning two or three matters which the "Poet" has given us, and which do not deserve to go unnoticed. One of

the best of these is the poem, entitled "Homesick in Heaven," which is really a wonderful conception, although it sets forth a theory we shall not all care to accept: although it is supported by the authority of Him who said: "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." The poem will be found at the close of the first section of "The Poet at the Breakfast-Table" (the book we are now reviewing) and supposes three sad and silent spirits in heaven, to whom a fourth is sent to ask "what their sorrows be."

"Chide not thy sisters—thus the answer came;—
Children of earth, our half-weaned nature clings
To earth's fond memories, and her whispered name
Untunes our quivering lips, our saddened strings."

One from her clinging bade was rudely torn; one a youthful bride, taken while the kiss of love still burned upon her cheek; the third was a daughter, who had left her gray-haired sire alone. The spirit sent to them says: "All in vain ye seek your lost ones in the shapes they wore;—

I was the babe that slumbered on *thy* breast:
And, sister, mine the lips that called *thee* bride.
Mine were the silvered locks *thy* hand caressed,
That faithful hand, my faltering footsteps' guide."

This opens up a vein of thought more suitable

for private meditation than to write about; we will therefore pass on.

There is the picture shown us of a boarder known as the "Scarabee," one who devoted his life to the scientific examination of a beetle or a parasite; and who delighted in what we are perhaps too ready to consider paltry and mean: forming a wonderful contrast to the young astronomer, for whom, as we have seen, the universe was not too wide a field for research.

Also we must mention the young lady—distinguished as Scheherazade—to whom the young astronomer explained the double-star, and of course, asked her to join with him so that they might be a double-star in the firmament of life: and the reader who is interested in our author personally will hardly forgive us if we forget to tell him that in the "Poet" he will also find an account of "The Gambrel-Roofed House," the poet's birth-place.

Altogether the Breakfast-Table series is a literary treasure, which every reader will do well to make his own as speedily as possible. It will yield him instruction and entertainment of the highest order: and be to him a mine of solace and comfort to which he may always turn with happiest results; there seeming to be in the books which form the series such an universality of thought, that they contain a message of comfort in some part for everybody.

CHAPTER X.

LESSONS IN LOVE.

"But there's a sweeter flower than e'er
Blushed on the rosy spray—
A brighter star, a richer bloom
Than e'er did western Heaven illume
At close of summer day.

"'Tis Love, the last best gift of Heaven;
Love gentle, holy, pure:
But, tenderer than a dove's soft eye,
The searching sun, the open sky,
She never could endure." *Keble.*

OUR author being so universal in his writings, it is hard to find any matter he has not touched upon. It is, therefore, only to be expected that he should treat of love. This he has done in his own peculiarly easy and graceful manner, lighting up his graver matter now and then with the sweet and touching simplicity of a love-story or love-lesson. Most of these we must, of course, leave the reader to discover

for himself; but we may anticipate one or two examples for him.

One of the most interesting of the love-stories is that of the "Autocrat" himself. We at first get glimpses of his love-story from the "Schoolma'am's" attention to the "Autocrat" whilst he talks, and from his inward reflections at the time, which he has recorded for us. Then he begins to think the school-mistress wants fresh air, and suggests a walk. The suggestion being adopted, other walks follow, and eventually we come to the "last walk with the school-mistress." The "Autocrat" says:

"I never addressed one word of love to the school-mistress in the course of these pleasant walks. It seemed to me that we talked of everything but love on that particular morning. There was, perhaps, a little more timidity and hesitancy on my part than I have commonly shown among our people at the boarding-house. In fact, I considered myself the master at the breakfast-table; but, somehow, I could not command myself just then so well as usual. The truth is, I had secured a passage to Liverpool in the steamer which was to leave at noon,—with the condition, however, of being released in case circumstances occurred to detain me. The schoolmistress knew nothing about all this, of course, as yet. It was on the Common that we were walking. The *mall*, or boulevard of our Common, you know, has various branches leading

from it in different directions. One of these runs down from opposite Joy Street southward across the whole length of the Common to Boylston Street. We called it the long path, and were fond of it.

"I felt very weak indeed (though of a tolerably robust habit) as we came opposite the head of this path on that morning. I think I tried to speak twice without making myself distinctly audible. At last I got out the question—Will you take the long path with me?—Certainly,—said the schoolmistress,—with much pleasure.—Think,—I said,—before you answer; if you take the long path with me now, I shall interpret it that we are to part no more!—The schoolmistress stepped back with a sudden movement, as if an arrow had struck her.

"One of the long granite blocks used as seats was hard by.—Pray sit down,—I said.—No, no, she answered softly,—I will walk the *long path* with you."

We cannot forbear giving the sequel to this, which is short: "And now we two are walking the long path in peace together."

How many timid lovers Dr. Holmes has served by giving them such an appropriate simile as the "Long Path," we cannot say; but we remember going into the home of one newly-married couple, and taking the "Autocrat' from a book-case, when we found its pages turned down to mark the schoolmistress' answer, "I will take the *long path* with you." And lest any

reader intending to make use of the simile should despair by reason of his being unable to ask the fair one for whom he cherishes a tender longing, to walk with him upon Boston Common, and down its "Long Path," we may remind him of the "Long Walk" in Windsor Park, which is near this metropolis, and will, perhaps, serve his purpose equally well.

Then there is the love-story of Iris, told by the "Professor." A certain young Marylander, who after the poor little gentleman's death, took the vacant chair beside her was assiduously attentive to her. "Some of the boarders were of opinion that Iris did not return the undisguised attentions of the handsome young Marylander. They often went to church together, it is true; but nobody of course, supposes there is any relation between religious sympathy and those wretched 'sentimental' movements of the human heart upon which it is commonly agreed that nothing better is based than society, civilization, friendship, the relation of husband and wife, and of parent and child, and which many people must think were singularly overrated by the Teacher of Nazareth, whose whole life was full of sentiment, loving this or that young man, pardoning this or that sinner, weeping over the dead, mourning for the doomed city, blessing and perhaps kissing, the little children,—so that the Gospels are still cried over almost as much as the last work of fiction!"

Those who sufficiently care for the Teacher of Nazareth will recognise in this a fine tribute to His perfect humanity and the entire character of the human affection in which even the Son of God did not disdain to indulge. It is, moreover, an admirable satire upon the grossness which usually—or, at least, very often—attaches to one of the most sacred of human institutions. It is true that women are not taken to an open market-place, and there "knocked down" to the highest bidder; but, in some instances, "society" does seem to be made a substitute for the auction-block. Perhaps a short way of expressing the root of the evil lies in the following epigram, given by Dr. Holmes in the "Professor" in answer to the question whether face or figure is most attractive in the female sex. The epigram is spoken by a young man about town:—

"Quoth Tom, 'Though fair her features be,
It is her figure pleases me.'
'What may her figure be?' I cried.
'One hundred thousand!' He replied."

To return to our young friends, however. Iris and the young Marylander took the opportunity to go together alone to the Church of the Galileans. "They said but little going,—'collecting their thoughts' for the service, I devoutly hope. My kind good friend the pastor, preached that day one of his sermons that

make us feel like brothers and sisters, and his text was that affectionate one from John, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.' When Iris and her friend came out of church, they were both pale, and walked a space without speaking.

"At last the young man said,—You and I are little children, Iris!

"She looked in his face an instant, as if startled, for there was something strange in the tone of his voice. She smiled faintly, but spoke never a word.

"Indeed and in truth, Iris.—

"What shall a poor girl say or do, when a strong man falters in his speech before her, and can do nothing better than hold out his hand to finish his broken sentence?

"The poor girl said nothing, but quietly laid her ungloved hand in his,—the little soft white hand which had ministered so tenderly and suffered so patiently.

"The blood came back to the young man's cheeks, as he lifted it to his lips, and even as they walked there in the street, touched it gently with them, and said—'It is mine!'

"Iris did not contradict him."

We are weak enough to sympathise with these love-stories, and to indulge in the opinion that love-matches pure and simple, such as these, have something about them worthy of admiration. Some, however, who

have "knocked about in the world" long enough to have out-grown sentiment, will have little patience with these sketches by our author and will think them very puerile. We therefore hasten to show these matter-of-fact individuals that Dr. Holmes is not at all blind to their view of the matter. Referring to Bernard Langdon, in "Elsie Venner," he says, "By the time he was thirty, he would have knocked the social pawns out of his way, and be ready to challenge a wife from the row of great pieces in the background. I would not have a man marry above his level, so as to become the appendage of a powerful family connexon; but I would not have him marry until he knew his level,—that is, looking at the matter in a purely worldly point of view, and not taking the sentiments at all into consideration." Then follows a vigorous and inspiriting sentence:—

"But remember, that *a young man, using large endowments wisely and fortunately, may put himself on a level with the highest in the land in ten brilliant years of spirited, unflagging labor.*"

Dr. Holmes' own sympathies are, however, undoubtedly in favor of sentimental attachment: indeed, with his own happy experience, they could hardly be otherwise. In the following example we have this love-question rather fully discussed, and it furnishes much food for thought. The extract is from "The Guardian Angel," and it relates to Clement Lindsay,

whom we have already mentioned, and one Susan Posie, to whom he was engaged. The young lady had just written him a letter :

" The envelope of this letter was unbroken, when the young man took it from his desk. He did not tear it with the hot impatience of some lovers, but cut it open, neatly, slowly, one would say sadly. He read it with an air of singular effort, and yet with a certain tenderness. When he had finished it, the drops were thick on his forehead; he groaned and put his hands to his face, which was burning red.

" This was what the impulse of boyhood, years ago, had brought him to ! He was a stately youth, of noble bearing, of high purpose, of fastidious taste; and, if his broad forehead, his clear, large, blue eyes, his commanding features, his lips, firm, yet plastic to every change of thought and feeling, were not an empty mask, might not improbably claim that Promethean quality of which the girl's letter had spoken,—the strange, divine, dread gift of genius.

" This poor, simple, innocent, trusting creature, so utterly incapable of coming into any true relation with his aspiring mind, his large and strong emotions— this mere child, all simplicity and goodness, but trivial and shallow as the little babbling brooklet that ran by his window to the river, to lose its insignificant being in the swift torrent he heard rushing over the rocks— this pretty idol for a week, and kindly, and easily

satisfied worshipper, was to be enthroned as the queen of his affections, to be adopted as the companion of his labors! The boy, led by the commonest instinct, the mere attraction of biped to its female, which accident had favored, had thrown away the dearest possession of manhood—liberty—and this bauble was to be his life-long reward! And yet not a bauble either, for a pleasing person and a gentle and sweet nature, which had once made her seem to him the very paragon of loveliness, were still hers. Alas! her simple words were true—he had grown-away from her. Her only fault was that she had not grown with him, and surely he could not reproach her with that.

"'No,' he said to himself, 'I will never leave her so long as her heart clings to me. I have been rash, but she shall not pay the forfeit. And if I may think of myself, my life need not be wretched, because she cannot share all my being with me. The common human qualities are more than all exceptional gifts. She has a woman's heart; and what talent of mine is to be named by the love a true woman can offer in exchange for these divided and cold affections? If it had pleased God to mate me with one more equal in other ways, who could share my thoughts, who could kindle my inspiration, who had wings to rise into the air with me as well as feet to creep by my side upon the earth—what cannot such a woman do for a man!

"'What! cast away the flower I took in the bud

because it does not show as I hoped it would when it opened? I will stand by my word; I will be all as a man that I promised as a boy. Thank God, she is true, and pure, and sweet. My nest will be a peaceful one; but I must take wing alone—alone.'

"He drew one long sigh, and he cloud passed from his countenance."

Few more complete and touching records of mental and moral conflicts such as that of Clement Lindsay have come in our way than that we have just noted. The picture is powerfully drawn. We seem to realize all the quiet agony of the troubled soul: and the sorrow which burdens the mind is brought vividly to our own consciousness. Alas! how many have had to suffer in like manner with him. Wild, impetuous, irrestrainable desire hurrying a youth after a delusive shadow, which is really not love itself; but which generates love most unfortunately. Human passions are so frail that there apparently is nothing to prevent this. A young man may settle down as soberly as he will to study or to business: he may make the biggest resolutions not "to make a fool of *himself*:" he may fortify himself with cynicism or what not; and yet, if there come before him the flashing of a bright eye, the glancing of a golden ringlet in the sunshine, or any one of those thousand trivial (?) occurrences which excite desire, his heart will be set aflame, eager longing will be aroused, and

it is all over with his plans, resolutions, cynicism, and everything else. Of course, in many cases, there is sufficient obstacle in the way of satisfying the sudden desire to cause delay enough for the stricken youth to recover his senses, and the opportunity is then given for something like deliberate consideration. But if—as unhappily it sometimes will, and does, happen—any young man should find himself in a position similar to that of Clement Lindsay, he can only in honor follow out the course suggested in the meditation of that noble character; unless, indeed, such a course would be manifestly unwise for *both* parties. It is perhaps a little out of place here to enter into a minute discussion of this particular point, but what we have said will serve to bear us out in our assertion as to the case of Clement Lindsay furnishing much food for thought. It is comforting to be able to add that—in the story, at least—Clement was released from his burdensome engagement; an amicable arrangement being come to by which Miss Susan Posie transferred her affections—already inclining thitherward—to Gifted Hopkins, the village poet; whilst Clement Lindsay was left free to prosecute a new, more congenial, and ultimately successful, love-suit with Myrtle Hazard, and was thus spared the generous self-sacrifice he had contemplated. Altogether Dr. Holmes has been most happy in his mode of treating

the delicate complication of loves which he introduced into "The Guardian Angel."

We may just quote a line or two here from the "Poet," showing that our author believes in the theory that love is a teacher, even of sacred things :

"Not from the sad-eyed hermit's lonely cell,
Not from the conclave where the holy men
Glare on each other, as with angry eyes
They battle for God's glory and their own,
Till, sick of wordy strife, a show of hands
Fixes the faith of ages yet unborn,—
Ah, not from these the listening soul can hear
The Father's voice that speaks itself divine!
Love must be still our Master? Till we learn
What he can teach us of a woman's heart,
We know not His, Whose love embraces all."

We will not pretend to such a large experience in the sacred passion as will enable us to justly criticise these lines, and we apprehend they will be interpreted differently by almost every individual reader. We therefore leave them to be pondered over.

We will close this chapter with a further illustration of the tenderness of our author. the object of his sympathy being the unloved. In the "Autocrat" is the following :

"There comes a time when the souls of human beings, women, perhaps, more even than men, begin

to faint for the atmosphere of the affections they were made to breathe. Then it is that Society places its transparent bell-glass over the young woman who is to be the subject of one of its fatal experiments. The element by which only the heart lives is sucked out of the crystalline prison . . . . .

"Yes, my surface-thought laughs at you, you foolish, plain, over-dressed, mincing, cheaply-organized, self-saturated young person, whoever you may be, now reading this,—little thinking you are what I describe, and in blissful unconsciousness that you are destined to the lingering asphyxia of soul which is the lot of such multitudes worthier than yourself. But it is only my surface-thought which laughs. For that great procession of the UNLOVED, who not only wear the crown of thorns, but must hide it under the locks of brown or gray—under the snowy cap, under the chilling turban—hide it even from themselves—perhaps never know they wear it, though it kills them—there is no depth of tenderness in my nature that Pity has not sounded. Somewhere—somewhere love is in store for them; the universe must not be allowed to fool them so cruelly. What infinite pathos in the small, half-unconscious artifices by which unattractive young persons seek to recommend themselves to the favor of those towards whom our dear sisters, the unloved, like the rest, are impelled by their God-given instincts!

"Read what the singing-women—one to ten thousand of the suffering women—tell us, and think of the griefs that die unspoken! Nature is in earnest when she makes a woman; and there are women enough lying in the next churchyard with very commonplace blue slate-stones at their head and feet, for whom it was just as true that 'all sounds of life assumed one tone of love,' as for Letitia Landon, of whom Elizabeth Browning said it; but she could give words to her grief, and they could not.—Will you hear a few stanzas of mine?

"THE VOICELESS.

"We count the broken lyres that rest
Where the sweet wailing singers slumber—
But o'er their silent sister's breast
The wild flowers who will stoop to number?
A few can touch the magic string,
And noisy Fame is proud to win them;
Alas for those that never sing,
But die with all their music in them!

"Nay, grieve not for the dead alone,
Whose song has told their heart's sad story—
Weep for the voiceless, who have known
The cross without the crown of glory!
Not where Leucadian breezes sweep
O'er Sappho's memory-haunted billow,
But where the glistening night-dews weep
On nameless sorrow's churchyard pillow.

"Oh, hearts that break and give no sign
Save whitening lip and fading tresses,
Till Death pours out his cordial wine,
Slow dropped from Misery's crushing presses—
If singing breath or echoing chord
To every hidden pang were given,
What endless melodies were poured,
As sad as earth, as sweet as heaven!"

Here we have yet another example of the "all-comprehensive tenderness" of Dr. Holmes. The "surface-thought" only laughs at the bare attempts made by the Unloved to attract attention; the "depth of tenderness" in his nature pities them with infinite pity, and is unwilling to believe aught but that "somewhere love is in store for them."

CHAPTER XI.

WIT AND HUMOR.

MR. SALA, in his meagre introduction to the Golden Library edition of the "Autocrat," says "Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes is essentially what is termed a 'funny fellow.'" We are sorry to differ from so eminent an authority; but we can only say from our experience of Dr. Holmes and his writings, Mr. Sala is essentially wrong in his opinion. He sins, however, with many others, to whom Dr. Holmes has given a gentle reproof. He says, with evident surprise himself that the fact should be so, "I have gone to a town with a a sober literary essay in my pocket, and seen myself everywhere announced as the most desperate of *buffos*—one who was obliged to restrain himself in the full exercise of his powers, from prudential considerations:" and he hints that such a description in no way applies to him.

The fact is, Dr. Holmes has a strong current of humor and a ready flow of wit, which he often employs with happy effect; but *essentially*—and, in-

deed, from the very character of his profession—he is made of sterner and graver stuff. Indeed, taking his works all round, it is a question whether they will not be found really far more serious than gay. It is true they are everywhere brightened by genial expression and brilliancy of touch, even when most grave; but it is certainly a mistake to say that our author is essentially funny.

We purpose, nevertheless, to collect in this chapter a few examples of the wit and humor of Oliver Wendell Holmes: and perhaps the following, extracted from "A Prologue" in the "Autocrat," will amuse the reader:

"Rudolph, professor of the headsman's trade,
Alike was famous for his arm and blade.
One day a prisoner Justice had to kill,
Knelt at the block to test the artist's skill.

Bare-armed, swart-visaged, gaunt, and shaggy-browed,
Rudolph the headsman rose above the crowd.
His falchion lightened with a sudden gleam,
As the pike's armour flashes in the stream.
He sheathed his blade; he turned as if to go;
The victim knelt, still waiting for the blow.
'Why strikest not? perform thy murderous act,'
The prisoner said. (His voice was slightly cracked.)
'Friend, I *have* struck,' the artist straight replied;
'Wait but one moment, and yourself decide.'

"He held his snuff-box—'now, then, if you please!'
The prisoner sniffed, and with a crashing sneeze,
Off his head tumbled—bowled along the floor—
Bounced down the steps—the prisoner said no more!

"Woman! thy falchion is a glittering eye;
If death lurks in it, oh, how sweet to die!
Thou takest hearts as Rudolph took the head:
We die with love, and never dream we're dead!"

We must not fail to mention the two humorous ballads in the "Autocrat," entitled respectively, "The Deacon's Masterpiece," and "Parson Turrell's Legacy." The former is an admirable satire upon logic, showing even its insufficiency. It must be read to be enjoyed. The latter ballad is a satire upon wills, showing the folly of giving legacies subject to whimsical and hampering conditions. The prelude is laughable:

"I'm the fellah that tole one day
The tale of the won'erful one-hoss shay
Wan' to hear another? Say—
Funny, wasn't it? Made *me* laugh—
I'm too modest, I am, by half—
Made me laugh's *though I sh'd split*—
Cahn' a fellah like fellah's own wit?—
Fellahs keep sayin', 'Well, now that's nice;
Did it once, but cahn' do it twice.'

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* This was "The Deacon's Masterpiece."

Dōn' you b'lieve the'z no more fat;
Lots in the kitch'n 'z good 'z that.
Fus'-rate throw, 'n' no mistake—
Han' us the props for another shake;
Know I'll try, 'n' guess I'll win;
Here sh' goes for hit'n ag'in!"

The "second throw" showed certainly that there was as good "fat" in the kitchen as that which had been given out, and the story of the botheration caused by parson Turrell's legacy to the college of an old arm-chair with a condition, is most amusing. Lawyers may, perhaps, think there is a little too much caustic in the "moral," which is as follows:

"God bless you, Gentlemen! Learn to give
Money to colleges while you live.
Don't be silly and think you'll try
To bother the colleges when you die,
With codicil this, and codicil that,
That knowledge may starve while Law grows fat;
For there never was pitcher that wouldn't spill,
And there's always a flaw in a donkey's will!"

However, even lawyers will admit that the last-quoted line contains a very large part of a frequently illustrated truth: otherwise the legal profession would be still more unprofitable than—according to some of its members—it already is.

Another amusing incident is the following. The

"Autocrat" records a conversation in which he showed how that each individual has three personalities. He says, "Let us suppose the real John to be old, dull, and ill-looking. But as the Higher Powers have not conferred on men the gift of seeing themselves in the true light, John very possibly conceives himself to be youthful, witty, and fascinating, and talks from the point of view of this ideal. Thomas, again, believes him to be an artful rogue, though really simple and stupid." We thus get:

"Three Johns."

"1. The real John, known only to his Maker.

"2. John's ideal John; never the real one, and often very unlike him.

"3. Thomas' ideal John: never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either."

The "Autocrat" then adds:

"A very unphilosophical application of the above remarks was made by a young fellow, answering to the name of John, who sits near me at table. A certain basket of peaches—a rare vegetable, little known to boarding-houses—was on its way to me *via* this unlettered Johannes. He appropriated the three that remained, remarking that there was just one apiece for him. I convinced him that his practical inference was hasty and illogical, but in the meantime he had eaten the peaches."

The foregoing is a good example of the manner in which Dr. Holmes lightens and makes entertaining what might otherwise have been a tedious demonstration of a theory. It will at once be seen how thoroughly he plants his theories in his reader's mind; for, taking this example, anyone who remembered the three peaches would be sure to remember the three Johns.

Another specimen of the humor of the young man John, is the following. The "Professor" had been remarking how men get tired of tobacco.

"Just so!—said the young fellow John.—I've got tired of my cigars and burnt 'em all up.

"I am heartily glad to hear it—said the Model [of all the Virtues].—I wish they were all disposed of in the same way.

"So do I,—said the young fellow John.

"Can't you get your friends to unite with you in committing these odious instruments of debauchery to the flames in which you have consumed your own?

"I wish I could,—said the young fellow John.

"It would be a noble sacrifice,—said the Model—and every American woman would be grateful to you. Let us burn them all in a heap out in the yard.

"That arn't my way,—said the young fellow John;—I burn 'em one 't' time,—little end in my mouth and big end outside."

Dr. Holmes has written a number of amusing songs

and ballads, too numerous for all to be mentioned, but we may give the following titles; The Spectre Pig, Daily Trials, The Music Garden, Once More, Aunt Tabitha, and The Treadmill Song. The last named is concluded by the prisoner—who greatly enjoyed his prison life—thus :

"If ever they should turn me out
When I have better grown,
Now hang me, but I mean to have
A treadmill of my own."

We think the examples we have given will suffice to show the character of Dr. Holmes' wit and humor. His works abound in frequent flashes of wit and gleams of humor; so that these literary qualities are spread over the whole, rather than concentrated in any one work. It is to this fact, doubtless, that we may attribute the agreeable nature of those works; for it so relieves them from anything which could be called "dry," as to make them most pleasant reading even when treating of the gravest matters. It is rather a cheerful smiling on the part of the author, and a genial mood which is maintained throughout, and keeps the reader always on good terms with what he is reading, that we find in Dr. Holmes' writings, than, as in some others, sudden and occasional gusts of boisterous hilarity. The secret of good writing is evidently possessed by

our author, or he would not be so successful in pleasing as he is: and we are inclined to think that the secret consists not a little in the presence of this continuous though seldom obstrusive stream of geniality and pleasantry.

We have but to add that the wit is always refined, and the humor always pure and free from any coarse allusion, and will then leave it to the reader—if he please—to enjoy these qualities of Dr. Holmes' works, by reading them for himself.

CHAPTER XII.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

" We have but faith : we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see :
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness : let it grow.

" *Let knowledge grow from more to more,*
But more of reverence in us dwell ;
That mind and soul according well,
May make one music as before,

" But vaster. We are fools and slight ;
We mock Thee when we do not fear :
But help Thy foolish ones to bear,
Help Thy vain worlds to bear Thy light."

Tennyson.

The great problem of many anxious souls in these days is how to reconcile religion and science : how to keep the faith of the one and accept the teachings of the other. And it is a great problem not so much because the essential qualities of religion and science are at variance, as on account of the various growths of superstition and presumption which have gathered about them and falsified both. For, if religion—the

child of the emotions—be true, as it is affirmed, and we have no difficulty in believing it is: and if science —the child of the mental faculties—be true also, as by its name it proclaims itself to be—then the two cannot be at variance, but must agree.

It is perhaps necessary to define somewhat more clearly than by naming them, what we mean by religion and science respectively; but we need not do more than give simple definitions. By religion, then, we mean the exercise of those emotions within us which excite reverence for an Unseen Power which we *feel* to be working for good; which convey to our intelligence unerring monitions as to what is good; and which lift us up from our material surroundings, and fill us with a happiness and comfort which is deriveable from no seen source. By science we understand that which is *known;* that which by what we term a reasonable exercise of thought—the fruit of observation—we demonstrate as truth. To exemplify these—when I feel myself moved to do what is by common consent called a good act with a pure and unselfish motive; or when I address myself to what I believe to be a Supreme and Omnipresent Intelligence,—earnestly believing, not only in the existence of that Intelligence, though unseen physically, but also that I am by virtue of the emotions which are in me, entitled to call It to my aid;—when I do either of these things I practise religion. (If I, a

sinner, should complacently worship, and imagine for myself eternal happiness, and for some other sinner eternal torment,—which imagination has been, and, it is feared, still is indulged in by some—I should not practise religion.) When I place my finger into a vessel, containing some substance I have never placed it in before, and find that my finger loses or gains heat; and then take some other unknown substance and place my finger in that, and find it gains heat in a less or greater degree than in the other case; the fact which thus becomes known to me is a scientific one; or, in other words, *I know* something I did not know before.

The illustrations I have given are perhaps simple, and belong to what we term common sense: and religion and science in common-sense lights, do not involve much difficulty. But, as we know, men are not content with common sense,—nor should they be—but seek to discover the hidden meanings and the higher—or uncommon—sense of all these things. They even seek to tear down the veil which conceals the Supreme Intelligence, and when baffled, some of them say It *is* not: that the wonder, and the love, and the faith, and all the glorious and indescribable longings of the soul, and the sweet satisfaction and holy calm, which come from the exercise of religious worship, or are connected with it, are mere phantasies, not only impalpable, but void; mere jinglings of

atomic forces, unusual and accidental movements of the molecules composing the brain, or other seat of intelligence, and so on. Nay, say some, not even so simple a thing as that; for there is no brain, and there is no matter, all is illusion, delusion, *confusion*. And so, from the sublime we step into the ridiculously simple, and then fall downward into the vague and mystic *chaos* and *darkness* of overthrown faith and disputed existence.

Nor is the prospect much more inviting on the other side. Timid souls, *fear-full* ones, blind ones, have from time to time striven to make the veil which conceals the Supreme and His goodness even thicker than they found it. The brightness and glory, the tenderness and love, which blazed through it, were too much for them. They have said, "This flaming love is enough to illumine the world, and lighten all mankind. That cannot be right. It is only we, the elected ones, for whom this glorious and blessed light of love beams so brightly." And so they have from time to time overlaid the veil with their parchment creeds and dogmas, leaving only little exclusive peep-holes for themselves, and frequently have lost even those. And when men, who see that this horrible layer of exclusiveness has been depriving not only the world, but the very "elect" themselves, of gracious light, attempt to tear it from off the veil, their successors, the alarmists of our day, cry out, and fear,

and are at their wits' end;—and the result with them also is *confusion*, *chaos*, and *darkness*.

Some few, however—having the soul to worship and adore, the great heart which can take in and love all mankind, and the mind to understand—have been enabled with keen vision to pierce through all the abnormal growths, and approach the veil itself; yea, even with reverent hand to rustle it aside, and get glimpses of the glory beyond. Many of these have been denied the gift of utterance: and only their own souls have been benefited. Here and there one has had the ready tongue as well as the keen eye, and has discoursed upon that recovered glory in such wise as has been sweet music to many kindred, yet less keen-sighted, souls; and has opened the gates of the best of all heavens—that which has its beginning here in peace of mind. Amongst these—devout and *true* on the side of religion; earnest, profound, and *true* on the side of science; a living, glorious example of the perfect reconcilability of faith and knowledge—stands Oliver Wendell Holmes; and whatever we may say, or have said, we can give him no worthier tribute than this. It is a grand and excellent thing that in these days when, to a large extent, being scientific means being without faith and without religion, one so sought after as is Dr. Holmes for his scientific teaching, is also a simple and earnest Christian. We all must have great admiration and regard for those who open

up to us the vast treasures of nature, and who show us the manifold operations of our bodies and our material existence and surroundings; but oh, it is pitiful that in so many cases the mechanism only of nature is discovered by the man of science; while the sweet and comforting influences, which are attendant upon the mechanical operations, are invisible to him. How eternally true that teaching is that these things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes and sucklings! The Greatest of all Teachers knew what he was talking about when he said, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." This is the lesson so many of our scientific men have yet to learn; it is the lesson Dr. Holmes has learned. We feel sure that all men will at last learn it; but we cannot but pity those, who, grand and glorious on some sides of their nature, have not yet learned it.

We would not have it thought that our pity is cheap, and that we are blindly led to our conclusion by some creed or dogma, which will not bear discussion, for fear of being destroyed in the process. So far from this are we, that we desire such discussion, and are willing to admit that many grave difficulties beset continuous belief in those same sweet and comforting influences above referred to. There is so much that is hard to understand in the facts about us, that in some lights the one-sided philosophy which believes

not in anything which cannot be proved, and refers all the pleasurable emotions to "molecular forces," and so forth, *seems* the safer philosophy. But, spite of the difficulty thus recognised; spite of the seeming contradictions; spite of mere reason—there are moments in life when every doubt is vanquished; when the cloud of unbelief is wholly dispelled; when the spirit is elevated far above all that is base and fleeting, and lifted to the heights of calm joy and assurance of immortality; when the soul is stirred with emotions of such supreme confidence and blessedness as transcend expression and cannot be guaged by words; when—to speak metaphorically—there is a rift in the clouds, and the clear shining light from heaven bursts upon the impassioned consciousness of the God-like in us in its pure splendor; and faith—the highest of all belief—is triumphant; for we see the kingdom of God and foretaste its glory.

As the "Poet" says:—

"We demand
To know Him first, then trust Him and then love
When we have found Him worthy of our love,
Tried by our own poor hearts, and not before;
He must be truer than the truest friend,
He must be tenderer than a woman's love,
A father better than the best of sires."

But in those heaven-lit moments we have mentioned, He – our Father—*is* so revealed to us: and it becomes

weak and foolish to prate of "molecular forces," and "sensibilities," and "volatile atoms," when the divine light and love are pouring their blessed radiance around and upon us. Life and its glorious possibilities are not to be explained away by the quibbles of so-called science, nor the technicalities of one-sided philosophy. Therefore it is we feel genuine pity for the honest unbeliever, and strong contempt for the wilful infidel, and wish for both more light: and therefore, also, we are grateful to those who, like Dr. Holmes, are both faithful and wise, applying science in the direction of truth, and religion in the direction of truth, using both for their legitimate end, the true salvation—mental and moral—of mankind.

Those who are further interested in this matter cannot do better than read the "Poet," and they will find its careful perusal amply pay for the time bestowed upon it. And although some of the lines ascribed by the "Poet" to "the young Astronomer" may appear at first sight to be scarcely enough regardful of what is due to the Almighty, it will be found upon closer inspection that they are the utterances of a perfectly devout mind. Indeed, the reverence of Dr. Holmes is even greater than any of his other qualities; but it is a reverence which is not fearful, but confident.

The following extract from a letter in the "Poet," supposed to be written by a lady who had seen

reverses of fortune, shows us something of this reverent spirit:

"Since I have been taught in the school of trial, I have felt as I never could before, how precious an inheritance is the smallest patrimony of faith. When everything seemed gone from me, I found I had still one possession. The bruised reed that I had never leaned on became my staff. The smoking flax which had been a worry to my eyes burst into flame, and I lighted the taper at it which has since guided all my footsteps. And I am but one of the thousands who have had the same experience. They have been through the depths of affliction, and know the needs of the human soul. It will find its God in the unseen—Father, Saviour, Divine Spirit, Virgin Mother—it must and will breathe its longings and its griefs into the heart of a Being capable of understanding all its necessities and sympathizing with all its woes."

These are the utterances of a student of biology, and professor of science worthy to be named with a Darwin, a Huxley, or a Tyndall. They carry with them the proof that science is compatible with religion, and religion with science: and that a very Goliath in knowledge may have also the faith of a David.

CHAPTER XIII.

MISCELLANEOUS.

BEFORE bringing our work to a close, there are some matters of general interest which Dr. Holmes has especially touched upon in his writings, that do not deserve to go unnoticed, although we have not space to give them separate chapters. We therefore have gathered them together into one chapter under the above heading, promising the reader that, although somewhat fragmentary, it will so far as lies in our power be interesting.

We may commence with some remarks by the "Professor" upon *Language*. The talk at the Breakfast-Table turned upon Webster's Dictionary, which production did not quite meet with the approval of "the Little Gentleman." Said he: "Let us have an English dictionary if we are to have any. I don't believe in clipping the coin of the realm, sir! If I put a weather-cock on my house, sir, I want to tell which way the wind blows up aloft—off from the prairies to the ocean, or off from the ocean to the

prairies, or any way it wants to blow! I don't want a weather-cock with a winch in an old gentleman's study that he can take hold of and turn, so that the vane shall point west when the great wind overhead is blowing east with all its might, sir! Wait till we give you a dictionary, sir! It takes Boston to do that thing, sir!"

"Language is a solemn thing,"—the "Professor" said.—"It grows out of life—out of its agonies and ecstacies, its wants and its weariness. Every language is a temple, in which the soul of those who speak it is enshrined. Because time softens its cornices, and rounds the sharp angles of its cornices, shall a fellow take a pick-axe to help time? Let me tell you what comes of meddling with things that can take care of themselves. A friend of mine had a watch given him when he was a boy—a 'bull's-eye,' with a loose silver case that came off like an oyster-shell from its contents; you know them—the cases that hang on your thumb, while the *core*, or the real watch, lies in your hand as naked as a peeled apple. Well, he began with taking off the case, and so on from one liberty to another, until he got it fairly open and there were the works, as good as if they were alive—crown-wheel, balance-wheel, and all the rest. All right except one thing—there was a confounded little *hair* had got tangled round the balance-wheel. So my young Solomon got a pair of tweezers, and caught hold of the *hair* very

nicely, and pulled it right out, without touching any of the wheels—when—buzzzZZZ! and the watch had done up twenty-four hours in double magnetic-telegraph time! The English language was wound up to run some thousands of years, I trust! but if everybody is to be pulling at everything he thinks is a *hair*, our grandchildren will have to make the discovery that it is a hair-*spring*, and the old Anglo-Norman soul's-timekeeper will run down, as so many other dialects have done before it. I can't stand this meddling any better than you, sir. But we have a great deal to be proud of in the life-long labors of that old lexicographer [Webster] and we must not be ungrateful. Besides, don't let us deceive ourselves—the war of the dictionaries is only a disguised rivalry of cities, colleges, and especially of publishers. After all, it is likely that the language will shape itself by larger forces than phonography and dictionary-making. You may spade up the ocean as much as you like, and harrow it afterwards, if you can—but the moon will still lead the tides, and the winds will form their surface."

We have in the preceding a very good epitome of the spelling-reform question. Personally, however, I must say, that while agreeing with Dr. Holmes that larger forces will come in for the shaping of language, I should like to see phonography tried fairly. We know that mere book-learning is not the chief thing,

and that what a child does and observes will best educate it; but so long as it is considered that the recorded observations of the makers of books form an important item of educational matter, those recorded observations should be conveyed to the child at as early an age as its understanding is capable of receiving them. At present, the flagrant absurdities of our language—especially in the direction of its spelling—are so serious a difficulty in the way of learning to read, that children waste a very considerable amount of time, which might be saved if a more reasonable system of spelling were in vogue, and they are thereby debarred from acquiring much knowledge. Practical experience has shown that spelling according to sound—or phonography—is a more reasonable system than that in use: and to bring about its introduction, it would be well to alter the form of our language. Nor would there be the danger in this that some—perhaps Dr. Holmes among them—appear to fear. For it would but alter the arbitrary arrangement of letters or symbols by which words are formed, and would not destroy the words: and since the idea—the soul's thought—is associated with the word only, and not with the arbitrary form of the word, no danger would ensue upon a change merely of that arbitrary form. We should like to further discuss this question of language, but must pass on.

Perhaps some of our readers will like to know what Dr. Holmes thinks of *Wine* and *The Temperance Question.* In the "Professor" he says:

"Whatever may be the hygienic advantages or disadvantages of wine—and I for one, except for certain particular ends, believe in water, and, I blush to say it, in black tea—there is no doubt about its being the grand specific against dull dinners. A score of people come together in all moods of mind and body. The problem is, in the space of one hour, more or less, to bring them all into the same condition of slightly exalted life. Food alone is enough for one person, perhaps,—talk alone, for another; but the grand equalizer and fraternizer, which works up the radiators to their maximum radiation, and the absorbents to their maximum receptivity, is now just where it was when 'The conscious water saw its Lord and blushed,' —when six great vessels containing water, the whole amounting to more than a hogsheadfull were changed into the best of wine. I once wrote a song about wine, in which I spoke so warmly of it, that I was afraid some would think it was written *inter pocula;* whereas it was composed in the bosom of my family, under the most tranquilizing domestic influences.

"The divinity-student turned towards me, looking mischievous. Can you tell me—he said—who wrote a song for a temperance celebration once, of which the following is a verse?

Alas for the loved one, too gentle and fair
The joys of the banquet to chasten and share!
Her eye lost its light that his goblet might shine,
And the rose of her cheek was dissolved in his wine!

"I did—I answered. What are you going to do about it? I will tell you another line I wrote long ago:—

Don't be 'consistent,'—but be simply *true*.

"The longer I live, the more I am satisfied of two things: first, that the truest lives are those that are cut rose-diamond fashion, with many facets answering to the many-planed aspects of the world about them; secondly, that Society is always trying in some way or other to grind us down to a single flat surface. It is hard work to resist this grinding-down action.

"Now give me a chance. Better eternal and universal abstinence than the brutalities of those days that made wives and mothers and daughters and sisters blush for those whom they should have honored, as they came reeling home from their debauches! Yet better even excess than lying and hypocrisy; and if wine is upon all our tables, let us praise it for its color and fragrance and social tendency, so far as it deserves, and not hug a bottle in the closet and pretend not to know the use of a wine-glass at a public dinner." Then he adds a general truth deduced from what he has said, the want of appreciation of which often comes home to one, sometimes in a very embar-

rassing manner. It is the following: "I think you will find that people who honestly mean to be true really contradict themselves much more rarely than those who try to be 'consistent.' But a great many things we say can be made to appear contradictory, simply because they are partial views of a truth, and may often look unlike at first, as a front view of a face and its profile often do."

In another place, Dr. Holmes gives us an illustration of *Roman Catholicism* as a depriver of liberty. It is in connection with "the Reverend Chauncy Fairweather," one of the characters in "Elsie Venner." He first shows the weak character of this man by telling how continually he was running to his doctor about trifling ailments: and then shows us his poor nature. He tells us the reverend gentleman was one of those who shirk the responsibility of thinking for themselves, and says, "He yearned especially towards the good old unquestioning, authoritative Mother Church, with her articles of faith which took away the necessity for private judgment, with her traditional forms and ceremonies, and her whole apparatus of stimulants and anodynes." Then the following generalization of the question is presented to the reader:

"So it is that in all the quiet bays which indent the shores of the great ocean of thought, at every sinking wharf, we see moored the hulks and the razees of

enslaved or half-enslaved intelligencies. They rock peacefully as children in their cradles on the subdued swell that comes feebly in over the bar at the harbor's mouth, slowly crusting with barnacles, pulling at their iron cables as if they really wanted to be free, but better contented to remain bound as they are. For these no more the round unwalled horizon of the open sea, the joyous breeze aloft, the furrow, the foam, the sparkle that track the rushing keel! They have escaped the dangers of the wave, and lie still henceforth, evermore. Happiest of souls, if lethargy is bliss, and palsy the chief beatitude!"

To our mind the question is well summed up in the paragraph we have quoted: and the quiet and pitying sarcasm of its closing sentence gives it a pungency which is characteristic of Dr. Holmes' writing. He goes on to express his wonder that a soul born to a full sense of individual liberty, should voluntarily surrender any portion of its liberty; but he does not altogether denounce those who do so, and can even make excuse for some of them. He says: "In our disgust, we are liable to be intolerant. We forget that weakness is not in itself a sin. We forget that even cowardice may call for our most lenient judgment, if it spring from innate infirmity. . . . But," he adds, "while we can think and maintain the rights of our own individuality against every human combination, let us not forget to caution all who are disposed to

waver that there is a cowardice which is criminal, and a longing for rest which it is baseness to indulge. God help him over whose dead soul in his living body must be uttered the sad supplication, *Requiescat in pace!*"

Everywhere in Dr. Holmes' writings there is the teaching of gentlemanliness, and the assertion of the importance of good breeding: and in the sixth division of the "Professor" the subject of *Manners* is especially dealt with. The divinity student had been somewhat teased at the Breakfast-Table: and this led the Professor "to make some remarks the next morning on the manners of well bred and ill-bred people." As to good manners he said:

"Good dressing, quiet ways, low tones of voice, lips that can wait, and eyes that do not wander—shyness of personalities, except in certain intimate communions—to be *light in hand* in conversation, to have ideas, but to be able to make talk, if necessary, without them—to belong to the company you are in, and not to yourself—to have nothing in your dress or furniture so fine that you cannot afford to spoil it, and get another like it, yet to preserve the harmonies throughout your person and dwelling. I should say this was a fair capital of manners to begin with."

Then as to the others, he tells us that, "under bad manners, as under graver faults, lies very com-

monly an overestimate of our special individuality, as distinguished from generic humanity." And then he adds: "It is just here that the very highest society asserts its superior breeding. Among truly elegant people of the highest *ton*, you will find more real equality in social intercourse than in a country village. As nuns drop their birth-names and become Sister Margaret and Sister Mary, so high-bred people drop their personal distinctions and become brothers and sisters of conversational charity."

We then get a thought which it would be well if we could bear in mind more frequently than we do, when we attempt to measure the amount of goodness shown in society—Dr. Holmes continues: "Nor are fashionable people without their heroism. I believe there are men who have shown as much self-devotion in carrying a lone 'wall-flower' down to the supper-table as ever saint or martyr in the act that has canonized his name. There are Florence Nightingales of the ball-room, whom nothing can hold back from their errands of mercy. They find out the red-handed, gloveless undergraduate of bucolic antecedents, as he squirms in his corner, and distil their soft words on him like dew upon the green herb. They reach even the poor relation, whose dreary apparition saddens the perfumed atmosphere of the sumptuous drawing-room."

Then our author goes on half-playfully, half-earnestly,

to give an example of this fashionable self-sacrifice. He says: "I have known one of these angels ask, *of her own accord*, that a desolate, middle-aged man, whom nobody seemed to know, should be presented to her by the hostess. He wore no shirt-collar—he had on black gloves—and was flourishing a red bandanna handkerchief! Match me this," he continues, "ye proud children of poverty, who boast of your paltry sacrifices for each other! Virtue in humble life! What is that to the glorious self-renunciation of a martyr in pearls and diamonds?" Then he adds: "As I saw this noble woman bending gracefully before the social mendicant—the white billows of her beauty heaving under the foam of the traitorous laces that half revealed them, I should have wept with sympathetic emotion, but that tears, except as a private demonstration, are an ill-disguised expression of self-consciousness and vanity, which is inadmissible in good society."

Our quotation on this subject is already long enough, or we might give the reader what Dr. Holmes goes on to say further upon good breeding, and the hints he gives for choosing one's physician or clergyman: as to which latter personage, he says: "If you can get along with people who carry a certificate in their faces that their goodness is so great as to make them very miserable, your children cannot. And whatever offends one of these little ones cannot

be right in the eyes of Him who loved them so well." But, he concludes, "after all, as *you* are a gentleman or a lady, you will probably select gentlemen for your bodily and spiritual advisers, and then all will be right."

We may pass from this matter of manners to one which has some affinity, namely, that of *The use of Slang.* Dr. Holmes has dealt with this in the "Autocrat," in which (just after "The Deacon's Masterpiece," in the eleventh division of the volume) we get the following record of a talk upon the subject at the Breakfast-Table:

"I think there is one habit, I said to our company, worse than that of punning. It is the gradual substitution of cant or flash terms for words which truly characterise their objects. I have known several very genteel idiots, whose whole vocabulary had deliquesced into some half-dozen expressions. All things fell into one of two great categories—*fast* or *slow.* Man's chief end was to be a *brick.* When the great calamities of life overtook their friends, these last were spoken of as being *a good deal cut up.* Nine-tenths of human existence were summed up in the word *bore.* These expressions come to be the algebraic symbols of minds which have grown too weak or indolent to discriminate. They are the blank checks of intellectual bankruptcy; you may fill them up with what idea you like; it makes no

difference, for there are no funds in the treasury upon which they are drawn. Colleges and good-for-nothing smoking-clubs are the places where these conversational fungi spring up most luxuriantly. Don't think I undervalue the proper use and application of a cant word or phrase. It adds piquancy to conversation, as a mushroom does to sauce. But it is no better than a toadstool, odious to the sense and poisonous to the intellect, when it spawns itself all over the talk of men and youths capable of talking, as it sometimes does. As we hear flash phraseology, it is commonly the dish-water from the washings of English dandyism, schoolboy or full-grown, wrung out of a three-volume novel which has sopped it up, or decanted from the pictured urn of Mr. Verdant Green, and diluted to suit the provincial climate.

"The young fellow called John spoke up sharply, and said it was 'rum' to hear me 'pitchin' into fellers' for 'goin' it in the slang line,' when I used all the flash words myself just when I pleased.

"I replied with my usual forbearance. Certainly to give up the algebraic symbol, because *a* or *b* is often a cover for ideal nihility, would be unwise. I have heard a child laboring to express a certain condition, involving a hitherto undescribed sensation (as it supposed), all of which could have been sufficiently explained by the participle *bored*. I have seen a country clergyman, with a one-storey intellect and a

one-horse vocabulary, who has consumed his valuable time (and mine) freely, in developing an opinion of a brother-minister's discourse, which would have been abundantly characterized by a peach-down-lipped sophomore in the one word *slow*. Let us discriminate, and be shy of absolute prescription. I am omniverbivorous by nature and training. Passing by such words as are poisonous, I can swallow most others, and chew such as I cannot swallow."

The slang question could not be much more completely disposed of than it is in this record of the Breakfast-Table conversation: and most persons, we think, will accept and endorse the Autocrat's opinions upon it. And these are quite as applicable to English talk as to American. Society here, of all grades, indulges far too widely in the use of these cant expressions: and the result is a confusion of ideas. It is hard enough to give expression to thought with the aid of such *appropriate* words as we have, without trusting to a few words, and making them represent one of a wide range of ideas, whether appropriate for the purpose or not. As Carlyle says in the "Stump-Orator," "The faithfulest, most glowing word of a man is but an imperfect image of the thought, such as it is, that dwells within him; his best word will never but with error convey his thoughts to other minds." If this be so with the most careful selection of words, and the most intense desire to choose right ones, what

result can we expect from the indiscriminate use of cant expressions? Then, undoubtedly, they have a degrading tendency—these "flash" expressions. The man who interlards his talk with them may get a reputation of being knowing, but that only in the worst sense. Indeed the indulgence to any very great extent in the use of cant words at once betrays vulgarity. This being so, the greatest care must be taken in this matter, and cant words must be rigorously excluded, except in such few cases as it is expedient to introduce them for one of the few useful purposes they are capable of serving. And the reader will doubtless have noticed that it requires some amount of watchfulness to accomplish this, especially if any intimate acquaintance should be addicted to the vice of using them; for—without such watchfulness—we almost unconsciously imitate any intimate or frequent companion in the use of a slang expression or cant phrase to which he may be addicted. Our closing advice upon this matter is, Be careful, and don't talk slang, if you can help it.

In closing we may just quote one other interesting matter Dr. Holmes has touched upon, and that is the relative value of *Argument* and *Opinion:* and the quotation, though short, will furnish a great deal of food for thought. This is it. "A man's opinions, look you, are generally of much more value than his arguments. These last he has made by his brain, and

perhaps he does not believe the proposition they tend to prove—as is often the case with paid lawyers; but opinions are formed by our whole nature—brain, heart, instinct, brute life, everything, all our experience has shaped for us by contact with the whole circle of our being."

If only some of our grand theorists could be brought to realize this, how infinitely little some of their "demonstrated propositions" would appear to them, and how quickly they would withdraw them from the world, and so cease to mislead those who are unhappily too blind to look beneath the surface of a plausible theory, and perceive the hollowness of it. Like the "Deacon," with his "wonderful one-hoss shay," they may build every part of their proposition of equal strength with every other other part; and even then, as with the "shay," the thing will collapse all at once, if it do not sooner fail through the especial weakness of some part of it.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

DR. HOLMES himself says, in the "Autocrat," "One finds himself a clever, genial, witty, wise, brilliant, sparkling, thoughtful, distinguished, celebrated, illustrious scholar, and perfect gentleman, and first writer of the age; or a dull, foolish, wicked, pert, shallow, ignorant, insolent, traitorous, black-hearted outcast, and disgrace to civilisation." He adds, "Good feeling helps society to make liars of most of us—not absolute liars, but such careless handlers of truth, that its sharp corners get terribly rounded. I love truth as chiefest among the virtues; I trust it runs in my blood; but I would never be a critic, because I know I could not always tell it."

In the face of this, one must be more than ordinarily careful in applying a "jingling string of epithets" to Dr. Holmes. And yet with all truthfulness, we think, we might apply to him, almost without exception, the set of qualities which he has first given us as an extreme example of flattery. And our disposition to

do this arises solely upon the merits of his works. One's liking for Dr. Holmes is generated naturally when we read his works; they present to us the man, and sympathy is immediately awakened between the author and his reader. So far as the present writer is concerned this has been so, and although his warm feelings toward Dr. Holmes have been stimulated and strengthened by a kindly pen-and-ink intercourse with him; yet in the first place admiration was excited by the simple perusal of his works.

Taking the calmest and most unimpassioned view of the matter, we may say that Dr. Holmes has written wisely, wittily, and well, and has been the means of instruction and entertainment to an eminent degree to a large circle of readers throughout the civilized world. That is saying a great deal: but we may add that it has been so far recognised that he is accounted one of the foremost of American writers. It is perhaps safe also to predict that when he comes to be still more widely known here than at present, he will take a very respectable rank with us amongst the great names in literature. For it must be remembered that not only is Dr. Holmes an agreeable novelist and essayist, but also a brilliant writer on science—not only does he amuse us with his wit and humor, but also ennobles and inspires us with his poetry. He has a versatile genius, and he has made grand use of it.

The present writer is painfully aware of his insufficiency to rightly estimate this genius: indeed to one more able it would be a difficult task; for genius must be felt and appreciated by the individual reader for himself, and its weight and character cannot be meted out by the critic. Comparison, even, will fail; for example we have compared our author in some phases of his thought with Thomas Carlyle. Some will, doubtless, think this an injustice to the English prophet, and a stupid piece of flattery to Dr. Holmes on the part of the reviewer; yet it is undeniable that in paramount regard of truth and abhorrence of cant; in vigorous thought, especially in the direction of religion; and in many other matters Thomas Carlyle and Dr. Holmes are essentially alike.

It may prove interesting if we try to get at something like a summary of the leading principles upon which the teaching of Dr. Holmes is based: and gather up in a few paragraphs the spirit of that teaching. And first we may say it is *Scientific* in the truest sense of the word. We have little mere technical teaching of science, and yet—hid in sweet verse or glowing prose—we continually meet with scientific truths. As an American critic has already said, our author has a wonderful power of popularizing science. So it is that we get so much of scientific truth, but so little of what we usually call the "dry bones" of science. It is also characteristic of this

teaching that in its scientific phase, it is not one-sided and materialistic. While allowing for physical imperfection, and moral results arising therefrom, which though bad in themselves may yet be innocent, and boldly opposing those who ignore such results and anathematise blindly and ignorantly according to the letter of some dingy old parchment creed: he yet freely asserts belief in some of those scientific facts which to short-sighted people are destructive of all faith and all morality whatever. At the same time, while admitting such facts, he faithfully maintains the higher truths of which they are but the lesser parts, and which they by no means destroy. Thus, as we have remarked in a special chapter, he harmonizes science and religion, and shows the unity of the two.

Then Dr. Holmes' teaching is not only religious, but is also *Christian.* This, however, only in its true sense. Taken in the light of certain conventional Christian doctrines, some of his assertions would be terribly heterodox, if not infidel. They play sad havoc with the "fiery" and never-ending torments which some divines of the old school imported as necessary articles of Christian-religious furniture, and which some of their successors of to-day deem it necessary to maintain. Dr. Holmes emphatically refuses to believe that a God who loves his people and who is all-powerful, will allow any of them to

remain in the "outer darkness" for ever; or that he will for ever tolerate the existence of evil: and his teaching on this point is to the effect that evil must at last be overcome altogether; that it is an accident, and not a necessary and eternal incident to the universal scheme. But that men should accept Jesus Christ as a divinely-appointed example of life, and truly live according to His command, is continuously taught by Dr. Holmes, not only by direct utterances to that effect; but also by the example shown by those of his characters whose doings he approves.

A great leading principle of this teaching is that of *Truth*. This greatest of all the Virtues is set high before us. Error, if innocent, is deplored; if wilful, is denounced. Hypocrisy, cant, double-dealing—all that may be included in that useful colloquial expression "humbug"—finds a vigorous and unsparing opponent in our author. Not less earnestly, though less vehemently, than he whom we may call the greatest Apostle of Truth in these days, Thomas Carlyle, does Dr. Holmes insist upon the urgent necessity of the exercise of truth by every living soul in every department of life. In this chapter we have already quoted his words: "I love truth as chiefest among the virtues"; and in a preceding chapter his advice: "don't be consistent—but be simply *true*": and truth, its worth and beauty, are everywhere maintained by him. No amount of appearance of

truth is enough, the real thing is demanded. It is not enough to be "consistent." The surface man may seem fair and honorable, all of outward form and ceremony that conventionality requires may be diligently observed; but if this be only a mask for inward deceit, and hidden deformity of mind—the mask is quickly enough torn off by our author, and its wretched shreds thrown to the winds. Nothing but the bare, honest reality will suffice. It is of incalculable benefit to receive such teaching as this. It awakens one from mere conventional routine to earnest life. It stimulates one to search into the real meaning of things, however thickly that real meaning may be covered over with the dust of error and prejudice. Altogether a more healthy and worthier moral action is gained. Especially does Dr. Holmes insist upon our looking at sacred things in their true light, and not in the artificial light which we too often view them in. And he has given a very happy illustration of what is required in order to attain to this. In the "Professor," he says: "If, sooner or later, every soul is to look for truth with its own eyes, the first thing is to recognize that no presumption in favor of any particular belief arises from the fact of our inheriting it. . . . The second thing would be to depolarize every fixed religious idea in the mind by changing the word which stands for it. . . . When a given symbol which represents a thought has lain for a certain length of

time in the mind, it undergoes a change like that which rest in a certain position gives to iron. It becomes magnetic in its relations—it is traversed by strange forces which did not belong to it. The word, and consequently the idea it represents, is *polarized*. The religious currency of mankind, in thought, in speech, and in print, consists entirely of polarized words. Borrow one of these from another language and religion, and you will find it leaves all its magnetism behind it. Take that famous word, O'm, of the Hindoo mythology. Even a priest cannot pronounce it without sin; and a holy Pundit would shut his ears and run away from you in horror, if you should say it aloud. What do you care for O'm? If you wanted to get the Pundit to look at his religion fairly, you must first depolarize this and all similar words for him. The argument for and against new translations of the Bible really turns on this. Skepticism is afraid to trust its truths in depolarized words, aud so cries out against a new translation. I think myself, if every idea our Book contains could be shelled out of its old symbol and put into a new, clean, unmagnetic word, we should have some chance of reading it as philosophers, or wisdom-lovers, ought to read it—which we do not and cannot now any more than a Hindoo can read the "Gayatri" as a fair man and a lover of truth should do. When society has once fairly dissolved the New Testament, which it never has done yet, it

will perhaps crystallize it over again in new forms of language."

The truth-loving, penetrating mind of Dr. Holmes is well shown in his treatment of this matter, and his idea of depolarizing certain words in order to get at the real truth and worth of them is very profound, and one which will bear much thinking over.

Two other elements in Dr. Holmes' teaching are *Charity* and *Love*. These follow naturally from its truly Christian spirit. There is scarcely any class of commonly-stigmatized persons for whom he has not found some excuse, and amongst whom he has not discovered some good. He has evidently gone through the world, not with the ordinary critical eye which is alert only to faults, and somewhat oblivious of goodness; but with the eye of the true critic—the just judge—and so has found what the immortal bard has so aptly expressed in the latter part of the last of the following lines:—

"Tongues in the trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and *good in everything:*"

and, we might well add, in *everybody*. The whole spirit of his writing is tinged and sweetly flavored with the kindly forbearance of one who knows and makes allowances for human weaknesses—of one who is eminently charitable. Then, how he *loves* any sterling character! When he portrays a noble example, his

words betray the passionate worship he has for goodness, and the intense love he has for the worthy. He lingers fondly over the goodness of those who, like Byles Gridley (whom we mentioned in our chapter on "The Guardian Angel") are nature's noblemen. He also expresses his deep love for those who are in anyway weak or helpless—young children, lonely maidens, friendless old men. Certainly the vein of love is one of the richest in his character: and charity one of the best ornaments of his nature.

Another marked feature of Dr. Holmes' teaching is its *Hopefulness*. Many of our best thinkers seem to arrive at a dreadful state of despondency as the climax of their thought. They see little or nothing but fraud and wretchedness in the present, and have poor hope of the future. They are overcome and weighed down by the contemplation of the sin and suffering they see around them. But—notwithstanding his profession, the exercise of which has brought him constantly face to face with great suffering; and his long and varied experience, which has made him well acquainted with sin—Dr. Holmes is not by any means sombre or despondent in his reflections. On the contrary, he is invariably bright, and cheerful, and encouraging—filled with the light of hope. He has sweet visions and joyful anticipations of the final triumph of goodness and happiness, and conveys them to his reader. Nothing which is morbid or forbidding can live in his

presence: and his writing scarcely ever generates any painful thought. This is emphatically an advantage to the reader, for while receiving the proper stimulus to thought, he gathers also hopefulness and comfort.

And, generally, we may say that generosity, bravery, and kindness, all that bears the true and honorable ring with it, is set forth as worthy of example: and all in a highly entertaining as well as instructive manner. But even this does not tell all.

If, however, we should have succeeded in giving the most general truthful estimate of Dr. Holmes and his works, we are content to leave the reader to gather the detail—which is rich enough—for himself, by reading what we have reviewed. We can safely promise that pleasure and profit will be the result.

The British reader will not feel at all strange in the company of Dr. Holmes' works; for they are essentially English, and are well fitted for the perusal of any of the English-speaking peoples. An English ancestry is fondly remembered by our author, and English influences gratefully recognized: and Englishmen are always referred to by him as brothers to his countrymen. But he goes beyond this: he is cosmopolitan in his sympathies, and the whole world is claimed by him as his family. Like all large-hearted men, while home has a special place, all the earth is claimed as the larger inheritance and fatherland. The great human family of all races and all

times is claimed as having furnished the material for the individual existence, and therefore that same great human family in its entirety comes in for the boundless love of its child.

After what has preceded, it is perhaps needless to remark again the English character of Dr. Holmes; yet we quote some lines of his "To an English Friend," showing how affectionately he recognises the English origin of his nation, and which may not unfitly form the concluding link of our chain of quotations:—

"The seed that wasteful autumn cast
To waver on its stormy blast,
Long o'er the wintry desert tost,
Its living germ has never lost.
Dropped by the weary tempest's wing,
It feels the kindling ray of spring,
And, starting from its dream of death,
Pours on the air its perfumed breath.

"So parted by the rolling flood,
The love that springs from common blood,
Needs but a single sunlit hour
Of mingling smiles to bud and flower;
Unharmed its slumbering life has flown,
From shore to shore, from zone to zone,
Where summer's falling roses stain
The tepid waves of Pontchartrain,

Or where the lichen creeps below
Katahdin's wreaths of whirling snow.

"Though fiery sun and stiffening cold
May change the fair ancestral mould,
No winter chills, no summer drains
The life-blood drawn from English veins,
Still bearing wheresoever it flows
The love that with its fountain rose,
Unchanged by space, unwronged by time,
From age to age, from clime to clime."

My task ended, the thoughtful reader, perchance, confronts me with the question: Unto what good is all this? He may tell me that he is delighted to know that there are such reading-books to be had as those which have here been reviewed; but nevertheless continue his inquiry. To such thoughtful reader, I would make some such reply as can be gathered from the following.

Man is not only, as he has been described, a "thinking animal"—his dog is that—but one whose eternal life is being determined slowly, but surely by the influences which here and now bear upon him. So surely as man has a soul in him, that soul must be fed or die—or, if not quite die, grow dismally and dwarfishly. And the food taken must be such as can

be digested, and as will make soul-substance; not such as will bring bitterness and pain only when eaten, and which must at last be spewed up again and got rid of by much groaning and travail. The food must be of the eternal sort, since it is for an eternal soul—it must be *pure, good, and true.*

Further, if "experience teaches" (as we are told it does), and it be right for us to argue for the future from the experience of the past and present (as it seems wise to do): just so far as the man truly teaches his soul and allows it to be instructed here, so far will he advance in the heavenly scale in the eternity before him :—the better instructed his soul now, the greater influence it will have then. Assuming this true, what a thought for the heavenly-ambitious soul! How it will learn, humbly sitting at the feet of any real Teacher, and counting little the "much study" which is "a weariness to the flesh!" And depend upon it, it is true; for, if not, why have we growing souls, why rapidly-increasing desire for increased knowledge and higher wisdom?

It is truly a sublime thought that the soul grows and becomes strong when fed rightly, as well as the body: that mind is capable of improving mind by friction: that an idea conveyed from one mind to another, is not conveyed at the cost of the one conveying it, but when given out yet remains, and by every new gift is increased not only in the number of

its copies, but in worth and influence. It is yet a sublimer thought that by the aggregation of such ideas the soul's individuality is assured, and that wisdom gained which increases the God-like in man, and raises him to nearness of fellowship with the Eternal and Almighty. It is a proof of the Supreme Wisdom of God that as in the animal and vegetable worlds nothing is lost, so in the mental and moral world nothing is lost; that even the unspoken word has its influence on the one soul that has shaped it, and through it upon others: that the spoken word may influence thousands, and indirectly thousands of thousands. And further, that this influence is the soul's food, stimulating and invigorating it, drawing out its powers, leading it to observation and action. Infinite Wisdom, though veiled in mystery, moving amidst all and regulating it.

This, then, is the good to which this work in some small measure, and the works upon which it is founded in an infinitely greater measure, tends. To the building up of all willing souls in that which is *pure, good, and true.* And, moreover, to do it, not in sombre, sham-gloomy manner; but pleasantly, and sympathetically, and brotherly—as by friend to friend.

As a parting wish for him who has formed the subject of my task, I shall repeat the two last of some verses sung by him in the fulness of his heart in honor of a brother-worker in the vineyard of life :

"Strength to his hours of manly toil!
Peace to his starlit dreams!
Who loves alike the furrowed soil,
The music-haunted streams!

"Sweet smiles to keep for ever bright
The sunshine on his lips,
And faith that sees the ring of light
Round nature's last eclipse!"

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